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IN
BENGAL POLITICS, 1921-41
GANDHIAN LEADERSHIP**

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GANDHIAN LEADERSHIP**

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To

my parents

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय

Preface

The emergence of Mahatma Gandhi at the end of the year 1920 as the guiding star of the Indian nationalist movement has since been a topic of discussion in the international scholarly world. Biographers, chroniclers, political theorists, even psycho-analysts have engaged themselves in exploring and analysing different aspects of the man and his mission. My humble effort is to make a comprehensive study of Bengal politics during the first two crucial decades of Gandhi's leadership, and to measure the extent to which the forces active in Bengal politics were guided by Gandhian principles.

The year 1920 had been one of the most decisive periods in the history of Indian nationalist struggle. Judith Brown has shown how on that fateful juncture Gandhi built up his leadership on the debris of the older Congress leadership. By a clever manipulation of the situation he captured the Congress through two successive sessions at Calcutta and Nagpur. He had, however, still some opposition to face. The most powerful opposition came from Bengal as Broomfield has shown. The predominance of that province in the early career of the Congress and her rapid withdrawal from Congress leadership after Gandhi's accession are two well-established theses. I have ventured to study the intervening period. For two decades Bengal fought against Gandhism and then reconciled to the fate of defeat and discomfiture. The untimely deaths of C. R. Das and J. M. Sengupta and the departure of Subhash Bose to Germany created a vacuum in leadership there and after 1941 Bengal hardly produced any eminent personality who could aspire for national leadership. Hence the retreat. By this time communal relationship had taken a definite shape and Bengali Muslim sentiment was submerged under the calculating and deter-

mined policy of the All-India Muslim League. The year 1941 also witnessed the political somersault of the Indian communists. Ostensibly that year marked another turning point in Indian history.

The first elementary principle in Gandhi's programme was to establish a monolithic leadership throughout India. This seemed to be a sort of arrogance which Bengal refused to accept. Before Gandhi's rise to power Bengal politics moved along two distinct courses. One, followed by the Congress, covered institutional politics, the other, followed by militant nationalists, made preparations for armed revolutionary struggles. The former was the recognised nationalist organ, the latter, though operating in the underground and holding loose-knit associations, nurtured a programme of an all-India rising. At the emergence of Gandhi with new principles and new weapons to fight with British imperialism, both of them, Bengal congressmen and the revolutionaries raised protests. Congressmen voiced their scepticism about different aspects of the non-cooperation programme through their press and through debates in Congress sessions. The dislike of the other party was of the principle of non-violence itself against which it steadily formed a barricade. So long the revolutionaries had kept themselves out of the Congress. In 1921 they entered the provincial committee, captured it and became the virtual king-makers of Bengal. They held ranks as Congress volunteers and under that cover rejuvenated their dilapidated organisations, established links with each other and upto 1935 their violent activities went unabated to the greatest discomfort of both Gandhi and the bureaucrats.

The common danger brought the two belligerents, Gandhi and the bureaucracy, close. The Government was hardpressed by the activities of the revolutionaries as well as by the advent of Marxist doctrines. Communist leaders

fomented trouble among the peasants and the workers. Gandhi's insistence on non-violent revolution, on the one hand and the deprecation of communism on the other lightened the government's task, but it cost Gandhi his claim to mass leadership. Lastly, his parleys with the Viceroy, his vocal sympathy for the British during the second great war and his hesitations in launching anti-British movements almost ruined his image in Bengal.

The period between the years 1921 and 1941 saw important developments in nationalist politics. The Congress was remodelled on a hierarchical basis, with branches in remote villages and franchise extended to all adults of Indian nationality. Its programme involved all sections of the people. The boycott of foreign cloth was to be pursued by the rich and the poor alike ; *hartals* involved big industrialists as well as small local shop-keepers, the seller and the customer, Hindus and Muslims, Bengalis and Marwaris. A working class population had emerged out of the slow but steady process of industrialisation and trade-union activities started operating among them. The Muslims had grown conscious of their position as holding the balance between the Congress and the raj, and utilized the situation in full. Within the framework of an old socio-economic organism, where new political developments were taking place, Gandhi sought to lead the heterogeneous interests under one discipline. A clash was inevitable. In Bengal, politically the most advanced province, Gandhi was challenged mainly on ideological grounds. The confrontation sometimes was with groups or parties, sometimes with personalities. The groups involved were the revolutionaries, the communists and the communal Muslims, and the persons whose ideals and methods clashed with those of Gandhi were C. R. Das and Subhash Bose. Both of them appeared in the limelight of politics in the Gandhi period. Das had an emotional attach-

ment with nationalist politics since the days of the Swadeshi movement, but he became a wholetimer in politics after the Nagpur session of the Congress. Bose started his career as a soldier in Gandhi's army and throughout worked in that capacity until he was expelled from the Congress in 1940. Both Das and Bose were sympathetic to the revolutionaries and drew their main support from the Yugantar group of revolutionaries. Both of them developed differences with Gandhi, broke away from the Congress and grew sceptic of Gandhism. Das led the first opposition against Gandhi ; his founding of the Swarajya Party, the capture of the provincial Congress by the Swarajists and his handling of communal relations on the provincial basis became the first symptom of disruption of the monolithic structure. Gandhi was leading the nation towards a non-violent revolution. He laid the greatest stress on non-violence, which he considered as sacrosanct. So as a punishment for breach of non-violence, he ordered suspension of the non-cooperation movement when it was at its most crucial and possibly final stage. The Bengal revolutionaries had then successfully opened up a second front and were carrying on violent activities side by side with the non-violent agitations led by the Congress. In the thirties the Communists also had become formidable. They captured the mass front, got mixed up with Congress volunteers working in the same front and spread the doctrine of violent class struggle among them. Gandhi's views on organised mass movements included social and moral upliftment of the Indian masses by educating them in clean-living, giving up liquor-addiction and attaining self-sufficiency by offtime labour like spinning. According to his tenets they should learn to unite against their oppressor, whoever it might be—the landlord, the capitalist or the tax-collector but should not in any case involve themselves in political agitations due to their obvious innocence of political consciousness. That was the ground

for which he refused to launch mass movements in India's struggle for freedom, but to the radicals this appeared to be indiscreet and against the interest of the country. The latter saw in Gandhi and the Congress which trailed him, the champions of bourgeois interest and so projected them as such before the masses thereby creating a rift between the Congress and the masses. Leaders of the Muslim community had always been suspicious about the aim of the Congress and were used to preaching the ideal of separatism. The extra-temporary alliance between the two communities on the Khilafat cause burst as a bubble and the Muslims agitated in their own way, considered only their own communal interests and held up a separate front in the fight against the bureaucracy. Bose's opposition to almost every item of Gandhi's programme had culminated in breeding the forces of separatism. Bengal Congress was running two sets of organisations—one directed by the All India Congress Committee and the other by Bose and his party. Gandhi's lofty dreams were shattered. Bengal was almost isolated from the mainstream of nationalist politics under the direction of the Working Committee, the supreme executive of the Congress. Fortunately for Gandhi, Bose fled the country soon and then there was none to don the fallen mantle of Bose and to continue his spirit of rebellion. So, after Bose's departure, Gandhi was able to bring the rebellious part well under his own control. The recrudescence of the force was felt in the Sarat Bose-Suhrawardy plan of making Bengal an autonomous province when the partition of the country was being finalised,

Gandhi's new doctrines of Court-Council-education boycott, mass organisation and mixing up of religion and politics were very much disliked by contemporary leaders. Bengal with her political experience analysed the evils of every aspect of Gandhi's populist theories, which I have

made the theme of Chapter one of my work. 'Defeated by Gandhi's overwhelming mass support, some of the leaders left the Congress, while others like C. R. Das and B. C. Pal accepted defeat and let Gandhi have a test of his methods. In course of the implementation of the principles accepted in the Nagpur Congress, newer elements of difference appeared between Gandhi and radical Bengal. A rift was inevitable and that occurred within only a couple of years of Gandhi's coming into power. The Second Chapter deals with Bengal's first successful revolt against Gandhi's leadership. Other forces, which were present in Bengal politics and tried to resist Gandhi's advent, raised their heads after the Swarajist challenge. Chapter Three deals with Bengal's aversion to Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence and in the following chapter is seen Bengal's pronounced anathema upon the pattern of mass organisation as professed by Gandhi. Next comes the Bengali Muslims who refused to take part in Gandhi's unity programme and Gandhi's handling of the communal affairs cost him his Hindu following also. The last phase of Bengal's fight against Gandhism culminated in Subhash' Bose's rebellion, which forms the final chapter of my work.

I am concerned with the study of the forces that disrupted Gandhi's hope of formulating the monolithic structure. To my knowledge, this aspect of Indian nationalist politics, i. e., challenges to the validity of the theme of monolithic leadership has not so far been taken up for specific study. I have tried to consider all the disruptive forces and analyse the perspective and the dimension of the forces, based on historical data. For a correct appreciation of the situation I have consulted as much as possible original sources like the private papers of Governors-General, Governors, Secretaries of State for India, Government of India, Home Department Records, Government

of Bengal. Intelligence Branch Reports, India Office Records (such as are available in India), Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly ; private papers of esteemed nationalist leaders, All India Congress Committee and Bengal Provincial Congress Committee files and such other letters, documents and files along with Anglo-Indian and nationalist newspapers and journals. Autobiographies and biographies of national and provincial leaders, members of the revolutionary *samitis* and the early Communist Party of India, authoritative books and essays on topics linked up with my study, have helped me with specific suggestions, convincing analyses and valuable references. Interviewing some of the living freedom fighters and the late Dr. N. K. Bose who happened to be the private Secretary of Gandhi in Bengal, I have tried to make a just understanding of the period, of its trend of thought, of the charisma and personality of the leaders.

In completing this work, the result of continuous hard labour for about twelve years, I have taken help of many institutions and persons. I had the fortune of interviewing some of the living freedom fighters and revolutionaries. Quite advanced in age, they put up with my questioning for days together ungrudgingly. Without mentioning any of them individually, I express my sincere gratitude for the help and encouragement they readily extended to me. I used the libraries and materials of a number of institutions like the National Archives of India, New Delhi, National Library, Calcutta, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, Gandhi Sangrahalaya, New Delhi, Calcutta University Central Library, West Bengal State Archives, West Bengal State Police Archives, West Bengal State Secretariat Library, Bangiya Sahitya Parishat and Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta. Many persons in these places readily cooperated with me in diverse ways and I take this opportunity for offering my cordial thanks to

them. Without in any way underrating their help, I think I shall be failing in my duties, if I do not specially recall the sincere help that I received from the late Biswanath Dasgupta of the National Archives, Sri Jagadindu Samajpati and Sri Asoke Sen of West Bengal State Archives, Sri Nirupom Som (then D. I. G.—I. B.) and his staff in the West Bengal State Police Archives, Dr. Sisir Kumar Bose and Sm. Krishna Bose of the Netaji Research Bureau, and the library assistants of the National Library. To all the authors whose books I have used and to all the editors and contributors of different journals which I have consulted, I tender my grateful thanks. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Prof. Amales Tripathi, Asutosh Professor of Medieval and Modern History, Calcutta University, whose guidance has been of immense help in the preparation of the book. No words can express my gratefulness to Prof. Benoy Bhushan Chaudhury, Dept. of History, Calcutta University, Prof. Kanai Lal Mukherjee, Retd. Principal, Saldiha College, Bankura and Prof. Sankari Prosad Banerjee, Dept. of Philosophy, Calcutta University. My daughters, Paramita and Ishita, have not only borne my long preoccupation but also inspired me in a thousand ways.

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GITASHREE BANDYOPADHYAY

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I. First Test of Gandhism

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a scion of a Gujarati Bania, originally grocers' family, imbibed the tradition and bent of a politician from his immediate predecessors, who for three generations in succession, worked in the capacity of Prime Ministers in several Kathiawar states. Mohandas learnt the first lessons of politics at Rajkot when he throve to settle as a barrister in the prime of his career. In his own words, "Kathiawar being a conglomeration of small states, naturally had its rich crop of politicals. Petty intrigue between states, intrigues of officers for power were the order of the day."¹ But he left Rajkot soon and being engaged as a lawyer in the firm of a rich Memon, sailed for Natal. Events at South Africa transformed the barrister Gandhi into a political leader, fighting for his native indentured labourers against their mighty, oppressive employers. The successful lead earned him an international renown and marked him off with the halo of a superleader with a novel weapon of warfare which he was destined to use in the Indian national struggle.

After his return to India in January, 1915, Gandhi made a close watch of Congress politics on the advice of his political *guru* Gokhale. He did not esteem the career of a barrister as his future, but aspired to be a politician. South Africa gave him a lot of experiences in method and organisation which he was eager to make an experiment with over a virgin soil which India provided. But the Indian National Congress seemed to be impregnable to a newcomer, for his years of separation from the political parties and leaders of India. He was no more than an observer, an approver, for two long years, of deliberations on the Congress platform.

He looked for an opportunity himself and found it in the Bihar peasants' wretched condition under the oppression of the European planters. At Champaran in north Bihar he led the peasants in a Satyagraha campaign and this gained him a footing among the Indian masses, who were so long kept singularly aloof from the mainstream of nationalist politics. The success of the Champaran Satyagraha inspired Gandhi to make a similar venture with the peasants of his own home province. His first struggle was led not directly against the bureaucracy, but against British landlords. Later the officials got involved in the question of maintaining law and order and the externment order served on Gandhi at once focussed him as a national hero. The second fight, however, was led directly against officialdom—it was a protest of the peasants of the Kheda district in Gujarat against the enhanced oppressive taxation and its collectors. He led his third battle in India with a view to securing a footing among the industrial workers. Eventually it turned out to be one led against his own class, the Gujarati capitalists, and the fight ended in a face-saving compromise arrived at through Gandhi's fast. The three campaigns produced the desired effects. First of all, Gandhi was acclaimed as a leader ; secondly, the 'foreigner' was rehabilitated among his countrymen ; and thirdly, there was an exhibition and specimen use of the weapons he would ask the nation to adopt in its fight against imperialism. Novelty was explicit in the manner he came in the political limelight—it was so much in contrast with the old pattern. Neither did he move any resolution nor fight for the acceptance of his proposals by the Congress, still he came out in flying colours as a leader. The issue he chose for giving a fight was not limited in the boundaries of any province, but it was a grievance with which every province was concerned. As a consequence, his elevation to the platform of national leadership seemed obvious.

Nevertheless, he failed to interest the Congress in the movements at Bihar, Gujarat and Ahmedabad mills and so had not to face any confrontation with the leaders of the nationalist forum however so he desired it. He thus continued to remain out of the Congress, without an entry into which he could not, he thought, change the nature of the national struggle for independence. He had to seek every possible course leading to that goal but in vain. In 1916 he was championing through various organisations the cause of Hindusthani to be the *lingua franca* of India ; in 1917 he pleaded for agitation against the restriction order on Annie Besant ; pleaded in 1918 for sympathetic gestures to the Indian Muslims on the Khilafat cause, and in 1919, failing to goad the Congress to take positive active steps against the Rowlatt Act, that had injured the sentiment of every Indian, he started a Satyagraha campaign with his own followers. His Satyagraha found little favour among contemporary leaders.² The curious point to note was that every leader had denounced the Bill alright. Jinnah warned the government : "You will create in the country from one end to the other a discontent and agitation, the like of which you have not witnessed."³ Only Pandit Rambhuj Dutta Chaudhuri and Dr. Satyapal, the Punjabi leaders, made a casual hint to noncooperation, in case the bills were made into acts.⁴ From 1917 Gandhi was urging but in vain for the acceptance of passive resistance. His proposal for resorting to passive resistance against Bessants' internment order though discussed at a joint meeting of the All India Congress Committee (A. I. C. C.) and the Muslim League Council at Bombay in July, 1917, remained shelved due to vehement opposition of older leaders.⁵ Bengal did not even hold a special meeting for the discussion.

In 1919 Gandhi's Rowlatt Satyagraha failed to touch the remote provinces from Bombay and Gujarat, the epicentre

of the agitation, the only exception being Punjab. The Satyagraha Sabha, founded in February, 1919, was under the influence of rich Hindu, Muslim and Parsi capitalists of Bombay. Of the 600 signatories of the Satyagraha pledge in March, 369 were members of the Bombay city Home Rule League, 120 were from the Kheda district of Gujerat, and the remaining 111 from other parts of India.⁶ By June the Satyagraha became a farce. In Bengal the agitation was received with extreme indifference. "The Rowlatt Bills had created little consternation at Calcutta in comparison to Bombay",—showed the Bengal Governor's diary entry.⁷ In an interview C. R. Das informed the Governor that the plan about disobeying laws had not yet materialised in Bengal and it was not very much favoured there.⁸ In fact very few districts observed *hartal* on 6 April as the starting point of the Satyagraha. "The main features of the recent disturbances (relating to the Rowlatt Acts) have been the insignificant part played by the Bengali element," noted the Bengal government, "Indications seem to be that the disturbances (in Calcutta) were organised from outside Calcutta."⁹ Indeed, at the provincial conference in April Das failed to pass a resolution supporting Satyagraha, with no more than one or two members supporting him.¹⁰ Obviously, Satyagraha did not catch the imagination of either the leaders or their ranks rather strikingly in Bengal.

Gandhi was trying hard to come on the saddle of the Congress. When his non-cooperation failed, he tried co-operation. In the Amritsar Congress of 1919 he touched a distinct note by siding with Malaviya and the Moderates who were pleading for working the inchoate reformed constitution under the Government of India Act, 1919. The Congress at that time was under the thumb of Extremist leaders who wanted a total rejection of the Reforms. Gandhi tried and softened their attitude towards the Act and the

Congress resolved to work the Reforms "for what they were worth", although they were "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing." This signalled Gandhi's first victory over the leaders in power, though, as the leaders themselves were confused and divided in their lure for the share of provincial administration, whatever its limitations, the Reforms would provide. They accepted, but yet agitated denouncing the Reforms on the belief that both the Reforms and the amnesty to the prisoners were effected due to the agitation they had engineered, and, as noted by the government, that they must agitate more to get more.¹¹ This 'politics of limitation' on the urge for sharing the administration by the extremist element made the dividing line from the Moderates too thin to cover the *de facto* capitulation to the Moderates, and to Gandhi, at Amritsar.

Despite his victory Gandhi was not satisfied ; because the nationalists for whom he cared more, made no secret of their disfavour and suspicion about the arrangement. He began to trek along therefore different ways for coming into power. With heightened hopes and renewed vigour he captured the Home Rule League ; renamed it as the Swarajya Sabha and brought about a drastic change in its constitution. These changes did not suit all the original members of the League, and many of them, like Jinnah, resigned. The nationalists had the premonition of such a usurpation as is beautifully pictured in a conversation between the Maharashtrai Jayakar and Gandhi. "You are an all-India man, in fact a world figure"—said Jayakar. "Your ideals are international, the gospel you preach is for the acceptance of the entire human race. you have even transcended the limits of nationalism ; I am doubtful whether it would be right for you, and for us to allow you to be bottled up within the confines of a small organisation like our League whose region of activities is limited and variable and whose methods

have changed from time to time, in response to the attitude of the British Government, sometimes descending into a form of hostility, which you may probably find to be in conflict with your gospel of love and peace. It is not impossible," he continued, "that you will demand from us before long, a change in our objects and aims and even try to secure in our creed a place for some of your pet theories which many of us may be inclined to regard as fantastic fads." Gandhi in reply said, "May I tell you that the only 'fad' in which I would insist, if I join your League, would be a common language for India .. and the gospel of Swadeshi. You need have no apprehension that any other theories of mine your League will be called upon to accept".¹² Nationalists, however, were not convinced. With strong suspicion about Gandhi's designs they held the last straw against Gandhi at the Calcutta Congress of September, 1920.

Gandhi's capture of the Home Rule League led to resignation of its older members. The programme of the Swarajya Sabha as formulated by him, included Swadeshi, Hindu-Muslim unity over the Khilafat cause, the adoption of Hindusthani as the *lingua franca* of India, the reorganisation of provinces on the basis of language and the abolition of untouchability.¹³ These programmes if alienated the sophisticated members of the League, gained for Gandhi the support of the entire Muslim population,¹⁴ the huge mass of Hindi-speaking people, the linguistic minorities in Bombay and Madras Presidencies, in addition, the large number of untouchables throughout the north and south of the sub-continent. Swadeshi or boycott of foreign goods was a welcome programme to indigenous industrialists, who now dominated the Swarajya Sabha, and would ever remain loyal to Gandhi's leadership. The Home Rule League had a network of branches, which now provided valuable links for the communication of Gandhi's plans to various parts of

the country.

The neatly selected items of the programme of the Swarajya Sabha showed Gandhi's astuteness as a politician. Provinces enlisted as backward in the Congress list, having Hindi-speaking, Muslim or linguistic minority population rallied behind him. Failing to impress the leaders, who "organised a limited and comparatively privileged group within the community", ¹⁵ he based his hopes on the numerical strength of his supporters and that paid him rich dividends in the ensuing Congress session. Meanwhile, the Rowlatt Satyagraha had created so much furore in Punjab, that the authorities promulgated martial law there. The reckless Martial Law Administrator brought the situation to a head by enforcing continuous curfews, crawling by citizens on the streets, public flogging and various acts of insults and injuries and precipitated at last a general massacre of the most heinous type. The news came as a bewildering shock to the people of the country. Forthwith Sir Sankaran Nair resigned his seat in the Viceroy's Executive Council and Rabindranath Tagore renounced his Knighthood as a protest against the Jallianwallahbagh massacre. Gandhi joined the row by returning his Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal, the Zulu War medal and the Boer War medal. Hakim Ajmal Khan was another person to return to the Viceroy his Kaiser-i-Hind gold medal.

The air was thus heavy with emotion and excitement. The publication of the minority report of the Hunter Committee, that of the Congress Enquiry Committee and above all, the condemnation by Churchill of the Punjab affairs, created such an extreme state of indignation that people, restive of the leaders, hesitancy, seemed bent upon even to sever connections with the 'satanic government'—a singularly opportune moment for Gandhi to push his weapon for acceptance by the Congress. The leaders were constr-

ined to hold a special session of the Congress to devise some methods for bringing the government into terms if not that of non-cooperation, as preached and practised by Gandhi. The Calcutta special session initiated Gandhi's breakthrough into the Congress. His programme of non-cooperation was already itemised for discussion in the national assembly in spite of the leaders mostly, if not hostile, indifferent to the scheme.

Gandhi's Preparations :

Gandhi started personal satyagraha from 1 August, 1920, a month before the Congress session was to be held in Calcutta, "Gandhi struck while the iron was hot," commented the journalist Durga Das,¹⁶ and his methods were made easier by Tilak's death the very same day he was to begin his Satyagraha. Ten days later the Treaty of Sevres was signed and that inflamed Muslim opinion against British imperialism. Sanguine of opposition from the Congress leaders Gandhi construed to make it a strategical fight at Calcutta and built up his base for that purpose. He relied heavily on Muslim support. He was wooing the Muslims since 1918. His letter to the Viceroy for definite assurances to the Muslims, states, "As a Hindu I cannot be indifferent to their cause, their sorrows must be our sorrows." Hakim Ajmal Khan's expression of gratefulness for Gandhi's sincere and brotherly sympathy, Gandhi's manifesto announcing moral support to the Khilafatists in 1919, his addresses on this cause to the Muslims in Punjab, Sind and Madras, and finally his clarion call to the Muslims to join the congress in large numbers¹⁸—led to the adoption of the non-cooperation programme by the Central Khilafat Committee at Bombay in May, 1920. After that he moved the resolution in the Gujerat political conference. Not only was Gujerat his home province where

he had lighted the first spark of revolt among the common people, he had also his trusted assistants, Ballabhbhai Patel and Indulal Yajnik, who got the adoption of non-cooperation passed in the face of the technical opposition that "it was not competent to a provincial committee to adopt a resolution in advance of the Congress."¹⁹ "This was the second shot in his campaign," commented Durga Das, "He could go to the coming special session of the Congress in Calcutta with this mandate instead of as an individual speaking for himself."²⁰

Contrary to Gandhi's preparedness, Congress leaders arrived at Calcutta totally unprepared. Gandhi's personal Satyagraha had left them in a quandary. Most of the provincial committees followed Gujarat in accepting non-cooperation almost under compulsion. Not that the nationalists were not against the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat 'wrongs', but they could not overcome their dubiousity about Gandhi and his Satyagraha. The Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (B.P.C.C.) resolution betrayed this feeling of scepticism about the principle. "The committee is of opinion," so goes the resolution, "that the practical working out of the principle should be left to each province that will shape its course with due regard to its own circumstances."²¹ The indecision of Bengal was echoed in the AICC meeting at Benares in June, Lajpat Rai opposing the proposal as unpractical and the question was shelved to be reconsidered in the special Congress at Calcutta. What R. Gordon describes as "diplomatic silence" on their part,²² might have been indifference or hesitance. "We do not think that it will be possible to give effect to the non-cooperation policy in a big country like India," wrote a leading daily of Calcutta, "It is hardly wise to show any rashness in the matter."²³ Bengali Muslim leader Fazlul Huq urged that "Bengal, where sentiments were still backward, should

be left out of the scheme for the present.”²⁴ However, Gandhi did not wait for their decision and started Satyagraha on personal level, as noted above. The *hartal* on that day (1 August) as well as those observed earlier in connection with Khilafat agitations involved the masses, who had so long been out of any national agitation. Ere then all agitations hovered round the Council chambers of Delhi and provincial capitals. For the first time, under Gandhi’s lead, they manifested their protests against wrongs done to the nation through *hartal*. “*Hartal* indicates that all the current agitations are not confined among the educated few only,” commented a Bengali daily, “but they have moved even the lowest strata of our society.”²⁵ Added to the strategic position, therefore, Gandhi had on his side a huge volume of mass support. Well aware of the fact that he would have to combat the passage of the non-cooperation in the special Congress and that he himself “did not carry sufficient weight in the AICC to bring it round to his opinion”,²⁶ he pinned his hope on Muslim support, who had already accepted his non-cooperation programme to undo the Khilafat wrong. The Muslims crowded the special Congress. Purna Chandra Mitra, assistant to the Secretary, Accommodation sub-committee, was reported to have said that they had got telegraphic intimation from other provinces to reserve accommodation for at least 300 Muslim delegates.²⁷ “During the long thirty-four years of its existence, no session of the Congress has been attended by so great a number of Muslims as was this special session”, commented one Muslim journal.²⁸ Besides, the Muslim press in Bengal espoused the cause of non-cooperation by declaring that it was a religious duty of the Muslims to accept the non-cooperation programme.²⁹ Thus, on the eve of the special Congress, Gandhi’s preparations were complete, while nationalist leaders remained prisoners of indecision. The result

of the debate at Calcutta was not unpredictable.

Non-cooperation Debate :

A careful analysis of the composition of the subjects committee at Calcutta reveals that Gandhi had received the prize of his Muslim alliance.⁸⁰ Jayakar went as far as to think that "the venue of the special session was chosen as Calcutta, instead of Bezwada or Berhampur, because of the former's Muslim strength."⁸¹

Besides securing Muslim votes for his resolution in the subjects committee, Gandhi could well rely on the Marwari and Hindi-speaking up-country delegates from Calcutta. He had sealed his alliance with the capitalists by the programme of Swadeshi, and his championing of the cause of Hindusthani won him the favour of the speakers of the dialect. Their advocacy of Gandhi's leadership was evidenced during *hartals* and demonstrations relating to the Rowlatt Satyagraha. The 1 August *hartal* was not much of a success as far as Bengalis were concerned. In the interior of Bengal, where non-Bengali elements were either absent or insignificant, there were no signs of a *hartal*. In Calcutta, markets were open except the Chandni Bazar and partially the New Market, both situated in Muslim populated areas. The absence of extremist leaders in the Town Hall meeting on that day was conspicuous.⁸² Gandhi has rightly described his own plight as "pitiable indeed." "I was absolutely at sea as to who would support the resolution and who would oppose it.. I only saw an imposing phalanx of veteran warriors assembled for the fray at Calcutta."⁸³

The non-cooperation resolution, framed and moved by Gandhi, was debated in a heated subjects committee for three days, and then accepted by a margin of 12 votes only (144 for and 132 against). The majority of votes on Gandhi's

side was cast by delegates outside Bengal, and by Marwari, upper-India Hindi-speaking and Muslim delegates from Calcutta.³⁴ The prevailing Congress leadership till then did not know the exact position they were going to take up. The President, Lala Lajpat Rai, "deliberately refrained from expressing his views on non-cooperation..since the country was so divided on the issue."³⁵ Motilal Nehru all on a sudden changed sides and joined non-cooperation on the very day of voting. The reason behind his *volte face* might have been his pragmatism,³⁶ or the influence of his young son who was deeply moved by Gandhi's programme, or by both, as contended by Brown.³⁷ Fazlul Huq joined Motilal, though for a very short period, "on considerations of influence in local politics."³⁸

Bengali Congressmen in a body refused to vote for the motion in the subjects committee. C.I.D. reports show that they were trying hard to enlist as many members as possible who were opposed to non-cooperation.³⁹ B. C. Pal moved an amendment accepting the principles of non-cooperation but asked for time to send a deputation to the British Parliament, study the outcome and then launch the campaign, if need be. Pal's amendment was defeated by too narrow a margin to justify the grave decision that was ultimately taken. The reasons for this attitude of Bengali Congressmen appear obvious. The bitter lessons of the past Swadeshi Movement and their faith in the 'politics of limitation' were not to be forgotten. Many of the principles incorporated in the non-cooperation resolution were tried in Bengal during the Swadeshi Movement, and some of the leaders, at least Das and Pal, were not opposed to the principle of non-cooperation altogether. Das was consistent in his opposition to the Reformed Constitution from the Congress at Amritsar; he had even tried to pass the non-cooperation resolution by the provincial committee in April, 1919.⁴⁰

Some of the principles in the resolution, such as Council-boycott⁴¹ and the proper time for launching the movement were occasioning doubts in the minds of the Bengali politicians.⁴² Bengal did not have any trouble with linguistic minorities, nor was there any acute problem of untouchability as it was in parts of north and south India. Neither Swadeshi, nor Hindusthani had any appeal to Bengali intellectuals. Even the mass of Bengali Muslims were untouched by the Khilafat issue. The problems of education on national lines by parallel sets of institutions were too well-known to the Bengali leaders, while boycott of law-courts would directly affect the livelihood of a large number of stalwarts who were law-practitioners; and the boycott of Councils would mean the loss of too dear an expectation. The Congress from its early days was agitating for a parliamentary democracy in India; it was no easy task for Congressmen to give up the cherished tradition. So they fought—unto defeat—and defeat at their own citadel, Calcutta. They disagreed to ratify non-cooperation at Calcutta as futile by their previous experience but failed to push it through.⁴³ “Throughout the whole period, spread over 35 sittings, this Congress has preached cooperation with Government,”—Jayakar gave his reasons for disagreement—“You cannot reverse this process by sudden changes adopted at a single sitting.” The politician in him had a premonition of troubles that would arise out of the campaign—“I warn those, in all friendliness, who claim to be followers of Gandhi and to have imbibed his spirit of non-violent non-cooperation, to remember that the ascetic discipline and self-control which have characterised Gandhi’s life can only be the outcome of many years of effort and training.”⁴⁴ The possibility of the leaders of having been obsessed with such fear cannot be disregarded, and consequently, the verdict that their opposition was based on rivalry for leadership,

cannot be accepted.

The deliberations of the Calcutta Congress raised a hue and cry among the politicians. The Moderates, already ousted from Congress leadership by the Nationalists, their erstwhile enemies, made common cause with them about non-cooperation. Sir Surendranath, being invited by the President, declined to attend the session on the following grounds : "Most of the provincial committees have declared in favour of non-cooperation, and the Congress will apparently meet to register a decision which has already been arrived at by the vast majority of the Congress committees. Mr. Gandhi and Maulana Shaukat Ali have made no secret of their intention to attend the Congress with a large following to support non-cooperation. The Congress will meet for the assertion of views which have been definitely formed."⁴⁵ In a letter to the President a member of the provincial committee mounted his protest : "I protest against the manner in which the members of the subjects committee were elected last night. The question of non-cooperation is the burning question of the hour. There are those who wish to examine this question carefully and see whether the very fluid programme heralded by Mr. Gandhi is practicable. Those who wished to be elected to the subjects committee had to declare themselves *ab initio* as pledged to all that Mr. Gandhi has so far preached without the authority of the Congress. The prospective members had no other alternative but to agree to vote solid for Mr. Gandhi, right or wrong, and declare themselves 'wholehoggers' or not stand at all."⁴⁶ *The Bengalee* deplored : "We cannot understand why the Moderates have been unceremoniously tabooed from the subjects committee, which is thus made a packed body."⁴⁷ Earlier the paper had commented that "among the delegates there was a large body to whom Mr. Gandhi's word was law and who had come with

a set purpose to see non-cooperation foisted upon the country by the decision of the Congress in its favour."⁴⁸ In the open session the resolution was carried by a large majority. Older leaders smelt rigging in Gandhi's victory, while Ambedkar, the depressed-class leader, complained of voting by taxi-drivers on payment,⁴⁹ and Das's secretary Hemanta K. Sarkar referred to "hired delegates from Barrabazar" who voted in Gandhi's favour to give him a sweeping majority.⁵⁰ The Governor of Bengal took notice of these rumours and informed the Secretary of State: "The English papers in Calcutta have been flooded with letters complaining that the vote in favour of non-cooperation was obtained by a jugglery, since those with votes were only given the opportunity of voting for either Gandhi's motion or B.C. Pal's amendment, with the result that those who were opposed to any form of non-cooperation got no opportunity of voting at all."⁵¹ All the stalwarts grumbled against the divisive restriction in voting, but all that after the results of voting were declared. What, then, had been the circumstances in favour of Gandhi that he could impose his decision over an unwilling body? Were other leaders much too sure of getting Pal's amendment through and so remained content till the results perplexed them? "I want no waverers", Gandhi said in the subjects committee meeting on 6 September. "Non-cooperators must be firm believers. It is the faith that shall triumph. I would rather drop the proposal so far as the Congress is concerned than to have a measure which cannot be effective. It may be possible to pursue my line of action without and in spite of the Congress."⁵² While his opponents were spending time in speculation, Gandhi was adroit in planning. "This remark had the effect of silencing many oppositionists, including Das", pointed out an I. B. Report. However, the opposition party could not reconcile to the situation created by its own tactical blunder and raised

a clamour in protest against the decision of the special congress. *The Tribune* commented briefly, "As regards the Punjab, we desire to make no comments until we know the whole truth, but we are on safe ground in asserting that the proportion of 254 against 92 does not represent the true feeling of the Province as we know it."⁵³ *The Statesman* published an interesting letter suggesting that the non-cooperators were actually in a minority: "47.7% out of total registered delegates took part in the voting, and of that number 31.4% voted for the resolution. From this I gather that 53.4% did not vote, or were neutral, or were opposed to the motion. Any one with a knowledge of arithmetic must admit that the resolution was approved by 31.4% and rejected by 69% of the total number of delegates."⁵⁴ Whatever the statisticians find, the resolution was carried by a majority to find its antagonists in utter bewilderment. That the Bengalis did not swallow the defeat easily, is manifest in such letters. *The Bengalee* made tangible comments: "Bengal supplied 2100 delegates, but only 846 participated in voting. It was abundantly clear that the bulk of Bengalee delegates were opposed to non-cooperation, but the small majority in favour of Mr. Gandhi's resolution was determined by the votes of Marwari and Hindusthani communities."⁵⁵ That Gandhi managed to command a majority through his non-Bengali support was a revelation to them. "At the time of voting almost all Bengalis assembled on one side while the other side was crowded by *Pagri* and *Topi*-wearers", noted one eye-witness.⁵⁶ On the ballot day, the scuffle between Bengali volunteers on one side and Gujarati and Bhatia Seva Samiti volunteers on the other, showed the prevailing tension between the two sections of Bengal's population. The non-cooperation debate in Calcutta and the results thereof forestalled grave issues that would figure in history of the coming two decades. The

non-Bengali element in Bengal's population remained Gandhi's base of power and as mistrust of Gandhi grew in Bengali politicians, firmer and heavier grew the alliance of Gandhi with the non-Bengali element of Bengal. Here was thus a vicious circle. Both Pal and Das were urging on Gandhi to postpone his programme; evidently they could not place their faith on it. Even after the acceptance of the programme at Calcutta, Das tried to persuade Gandhi for withholding it for at least five years and utilising the time for the preparation of the country.⁵⁷ This want of faith in Gandhi's leadership was maintained throughout. The Calcutta Special Congress was a precursor of coming events.

Inauguration of Non-Cooperation :

Among the stalwarts of the Congress, Gandhi had the support only of Motilal Nehru at Calcutta. All leading Bengali politicians like B. C. Pal, Motilal Ghosh, Byomkesh Chakravarti and C. R. Das were in opposition. The final battle ensued at the annual session of the Congress at Nagpur in December. Das, though committed against non-cooperation, changed his mind at Nagpur. His main point of opposition to Gandhi's programme became the boycott of Councils. "Mr. C. R. Das led the opposition," noted Jawaharlal Nehru, "not because he disapproved of the spirit behind the resolution, for he was prepared to go as far, or even further, but chiefly because he objected to the boycott of the new legislatures."⁵⁸ Meeting in December, 1920, Das and Gandhi came to an understanding. For the time being the question of council-boycott was shelved, it was withdrawn from the main resolution, and "both agreed to the other freedom of propaganda in his own sphere for the future."⁵⁹ With the agreement in pocket, Das with his band of followers supported the non-cooperation resolution at Nagpur.⁶⁰ His change of mind was interpreted in

multifarious lights. "Confronted at Nagpur with unmistakable indications of Gandhi's outstanding influence, he realised that his own prestige and influence would suffer less by a compromise than by certain rejection of his views in the Congress", opined the Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal.⁶¹ In another report of the Bengal Government it was stated that Das's vanity and love of popularity might partially account for his conversion.⁶² In the opinion of a modern writer, "It was now clear that he could not even carry the whole Bengal contingent with him if he opposed Gandhi."⁶³ Whatever the exact reasons, the withdrawal of the Council-boycott clause must have been a determining factor in this changed stance of Das.

Das's conversion marked the beginning of the non-cooperation campaign. Amidst cheers and joys the Congress resolved at Nagpur to sever all connections with personal honours, institutions and professions connected with the 'Satanic government,' until the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs were righted and Swarajya was established. Being sincere to the pledge Das and Motilal Nehru, both of them giants in their profession, gave up practice at the bar and persuaded many to give up their own. They did so at least temporarily, but their conversion was neither total, nor whole-hearted, rather at the core of their heart, they cherished the desire to be relieved of the bond, the sooner the better. Lajpat Rai "privately expressed his diffidence about the Gandhian programme", informed Durga Das.⁶⁴ Jinnah expressed his dissent openly: "With great respect for Gandhi and those who think with him, I make bold to say that you will never get your independence without blood shed."⁶⁵

The efficacy of the weapon of non-cooperation might have appeared questionable to Das also as it did to other leaders; but once pledged to the creed he plunged headlong

in the movement to make it a success. That was the green signal and Bengal cast off her reluctance to join the movement. Bengali nationalist press greeted the programme accepted at Nagpur. "For its comprehensiveness, breadth and farsightedness it stands as a unique resoution in the annals of the Congress" commented the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*; it covered, continued the editor, "every sphere of healthy national activity." ⁶⁶ Das reorganised the congress organisation in Bengal. Calcutta had four district offices, while in the mufassil district, sub-divisional and village committees, subordinate to the Provincial committee, formed the hierarchy. All these committees had, as their primary duties, to canvass for funds, enhance the spinning campaign, picket before foreign cloth and liquor shops and sell *Khaddar*. They were also to persuade parents and their wards to leave government schools and colleges. The movement gained maximum strength among the students who joined the movement in thousands. The Bangabasi, City and Ripon Colleges were first to be emptied, and then one by one all the colleges in Calcutta followed suit. The fever rapidly spread among students in Mymensingh, Faridpur, Chandpur, Pabna, Dacca and all other mufassil towns. A memorable scene was enacted by the picketers before the Senate Hall, urging the law examinees not to sit for the examination. The Viceroy telegraphed to the Secretary of State at London ; "Situations in Calcutta acute, situation reported to be grave at Dacca. Reports from Hooghly indicate considerable cxcitement among the students." ⁶⁷

The Movement Gathers Strength :

Gandhi's carefully timed arrival at Calcutta only a few days before the Nagpur Congress, made little progress towards rousing the reluctant Bengal in favour of non-coopera-

tion. "Gandhi is regarded with veneration and any abuse of him would not be allowed," noted the government, "but his non-cooperation programme is regarded almost with the tolerance extended to children's games,"⁶⁹ But with its acceptance by Das at Nagpur the situation became just the reverse. "Mammoth meetings were held, large processions of youthful enthusiasts marched through streets, picketing schools and colleges and the University."⁷⁰ By March there were 14 and by May 19 regular National Service Corps of volunteers established in different places in the province to carry on propaganda.⁷⁰ The Government of Bengal reported of fresh life being stimulated in the national institutions which had been started during the Swadeshi Movement, as also of opening of new ones. In the Burdwan Division there were 32 national schools with 2,184 students, in the Rajsahi Division 13 schools with 764 students, in the Dacca Division 94 schools with 9,046 students, while in the Presidency Division the number of national schools was reported to be 16. The Inspector of Schools noted a remarkable increase in the number of students who were admitted in the Bengal Technical Institute at Maniktala for vocational training.⁷¹ The enthusiasm of the students were further fanned when Gandhi himself came down to Calcutta and addressed them in the following manner; "I have expected no less; I certainly expected still more. Bengal has great intelligence, it has a greater heart, it has more than its share of spiritual for which our country is specially noted. You have more imagination, more faith and more emotion than the rest of India. You have falsified the calumny of cowardice on more occasions than one. There is, therefore, no reason why Bengal should not lead now as it has done before."⁷²

Bengal did give the lead; but it was probably Gandhi's promise of *Swaraj* within one year that had done the magic of winning over the Bengali Youth. In the Special Congress

at Calcutta he had said ; “If there is sufficient response to my scheme, I make bold to reiterate my statement that is we can get *Swaraj* in the course of one year.” Three months later, in December, he again said, “My experience during the last months fills me with the hope that within the nine months that remain of the year in which I have expected *Swaraj* for India we shall redress the two wrongs and we shall see *Swaraj* established in accordance with the wishes of the people of India.” On 30 January, while addressing a meeting of students at Calcutta he said, “If the response continues as it has begun there is no doubt of *Swaraj* coming within the time prescribed.”⁷³ But, as pointed out by the Deputy Director, Intelligence Branch, he refrained from making further promises on this subject after 1921. “These promises of *Swaraj*, which Gandhi obviously knew that he could not fulfil, were made with the object of stimulating excitement in the masses by giving them something tangible to which to look forward”⁷⁴ —this view of the Deputy Director might certainly have prompted Gandhi to preach a seemingly impracticable ideal. However, the movement gathered momentum when the Duke of Connought came to inaugurate the Bengal Legislative Council. The non-cooperators caught hold of the opportunity. The Duke was greeted by a complete *hartal* in the city of Calcutta and when he went to unveil King Edward’s statue at the *Maidan*, “it was certainly very empty, indeed there appeared to be less people than there are on any ordinary day of the week”.⁷⁵ *Hartal* served as an effective means for the purpose of showing Indian peoples’ disfavour of British imperialism. Ronaldshay took a tour in eastern Bengal and in Rangpur, Bogra and Dacca, in fact everywhere, he met with *hartals*.⁷⁶ The student workers carried the message of non-cooperation to all corners of the country, collected funds, enlisted members, held meetings and demonstrations, preached Satayagraha,

established arbitration boards, taught spinning and weaving and encouraged the revival of home industries.⁷⁷ On the death anniversary of Tilak on 1 August, there were huge bonfires of foreign cloths. B.N. Sasmal, Ajoy Mukherjee, Jatin Roy, Iswar Jana, Manas Govinda Sen and other members of the BPCC organised Ganamangala, Kalyan Samgha and Abhoy Ashramas to convey the doctrine of self-help among the villagers. These organisations remained important centres of mass contact. Their organisers achieved a fair amount of success in making spinning an off-time job not only for the peasants and their family-members, but also for the otherwise self-employed earners like a coolie in a coal-shop or a salesman in a sweet-meat shop. Even the village prostitutes were induced to take to spinning for a livelihood.⁷⁸

Through the non-cooperation programme Gandhi succeeded in aligning the so long indifferent millions of the Indian society with the National Congress, for the first time practically. The Nagpur Congress defined its attitude and policy regarding the organisation of the labour forces. The Congress expressed its fullest sympathy with working class of India in their struggle to secure their legitimate rights by the organisation of Trade Unions. Prominent Congress leaders like Lajpat Rai and C.R. Das, who formed the Congress labour sub-committee, also figured in the standing committee of the All India Trade Union Congress (A.I.T.U.C). Through its Secretary, Diwan Chaman Lal, the AITUC became an "active sympathiser and co-operator in the general non-cooperation movement."⁷⁹ The government did not fail to notice that the AITUC had "decided tinge of politics of the Non-cooperation variety", because during the second session of it at Jharia the pandal was decorated in *Khadi* and a number of delegates wore *Khadi* clothes and Gandhi-caps.⁸⁰ The rising cog of living after the

World War and the slump in jute business were causes of labour unrest in and around Calcutta. Congress volunteers were quick to seize such opportunities and through their efforts series of labour strikes rampaged Bengal during the non-cooperation movement. Strikes by carters, tramwaymen and taxi-drivers in the city, and by workers in the jute mills and coal-fields had almost paralysed normal life in Bengal. The crowning success of the non-cooperators was, however, in the handling of the Assam tea-garden affairs and the subsequent Railways and Steamer strikes. It brought them an immense popularity. Consequently the government tried to put all the blames for the hardship faced by the striking coolies on the nationalists. An Assam Government Communique showed that coolies in Chargola and Longai Valley Tea Gardens were agitating for an increase in their pay, but the owners could not agree owing to the trade depression which had hit the tea industry hard. Local non-cooperators seized the leadership, the government believed, and fomented discontent against the European owners and the government. The coolies attended the non-cooperation meetings near the gardens where they were incited to strike. They were made to believe that Gandhi had chartered a steamer for their transhipment to their homestations, and that they had been ordered by Gandhi to leave the European-owned gardens immediately. So they left the gardens and managed to arrive at Chandpur without paying the railway fares. The Karimganj Congress committee now assumed charge of their food and accommodation. The coolies had not indeed the means to pay the steamer fare, and the government would not allow their transhipment free of cost. That led to a deadlock in their movement, and the assemblage of so many people in the small area of Chandpur Railway Station created there an insanitary condition. The authorities undertook to clear the area with the help of a party of

military, police and in so doing claimed that no weapons other than unloaded rifles without bayonets were used.⁸¹

This story, as related above, was fabricated by the government and published in the pages of the *Statesman*,⁸² with the sinister motive of showing the non-cooperators as originators of all troubles. But an unbiased analysis of the situation would reveal the things in their correct perspective. The very low rate of wages paid to the tea-garden coolies, arbitrary wage-cuts and imposition of additional duties indeed were at the root of the exodus of coolies from the gardens in April, 1921.⁸³ To the planters, of course, a limited form of exodus was welcome as that would solve the problem of surplus labour caused by the trade depression. But when the number of outgoing coolies exceeded the planters' expectations, they asked the government to intervene, and that intervention led to the Chandpur imbroglio. Bengal congressmen under Das's leadership organised meetings for raising money for the repatriation of the stranded coolies. It was reported that a sum of Rs. 10,000 was diverted for that purpose by Das in response to Nirmal Chander's request, out of the Bengal Cyclone Relief Fund.⁸⁴ The non-cooperators did effectively make it a national issue, and soon the trouble that had started between the planters and the workers, developed to a tussle between the government and the nationalists. The government resorted to violent measures like bringing the military police and that helped the nationalists' cause. The latter easily organised sympathetic strikes by the Assam-Bengal Railway and Steamship workers, as well as *hartals* in neighbouring areas, as marks of protest against the 'Gurkha outrage' on the stranded coolies. Das was on a scheduled tour of north Bengal in the course of which he went to Goalondo and addressed the coolies. It was only natural that the non-cooperators would come to sympathise with the victims of such inhuman repression of

the government. C. F. Andrews condemned the Railway and Steamer strikes as most inopportune and unwise as it had added to the suffering of the coolies.⁸⁵ Evidently Christian piety had moved Andrews, but the Congress could bypass neither the chance of allying the masses, nor the chance that had presented itself of uniting the labour world on a common cause.

These strikes caused a severe strain on the government. "In spite of numerous prosecutions and restrictive orders, a general weakening of the respect for law and order resulted from all these activities"—the Viceroy informed the Secretary of State. "Frequent outbreaks of mob violence followed from this in various parts of the country and racial feelings directed against Europeans increased, whether they were engaged in commerce or in the service of the Government."⁸⁶ It would have been political suicide for Das had he not taken interest in the coolie affair. The government's involvement entwined him almost under compulsion. The BPCC directed the affairs and even financed the subordinate committees for supporting the coolies. The government was severely inconvenienced by the stoppage of communication in such a tense situation. The strike brought disaster in its train, as confessed by Subhas Bose himself.⁸⁷ A not inconsiderable number of coolies died of cholera due to insanitation, and those who survived had to face immense hardship. When local markets remained closed during *hartals*, steady supply of food from outer sources was imperative, specially when there was a large concentration of refugees in a small town. The general public, even the non-cooperators themselves were inconvenienced in this way by the rail and steamer strikes. Nevertheless, the whole affair was regarded as a great victory of the provincial congress over the government as the champion of the poor masses. Here lies the justification of the involvement; Das had translated the principles

of the Nagpur resolution into practice; the elitist congress thus metamorphosed to a new national body, pledged to the welfare of the Indian masses.

In Bihar and U.P. the non-cooperators fostered peasants' movements against European planters and landlords. In Bengal they took up in general a policy of non-payment of certain minor taxes like the *choukidari* or Union Board taxes. The non-cooperators resisted formation of Union Boards, as they feared, the bureaucracy would get the handle to influence and divide the innocent and gullible peasantry and insulate them from the transmission of nationalism. Birendranath Sasmal, the *Mahisya* barrister and one of the ablest lieutenants of Das, expressed his apprehension that "the outer artificialities and even comforts would lead to the complete cultural conquest of the people."⁸⁸ He cautioned also that the Village Self-Government Act, 1919, under which Union Boards were to be set up, had not given any important powers to the people. The probability of a fresh enhanced burden of taxation created a feeling of intense resentment, and local newspaper like *Nihar* and *Medini-bandhab* gave expression to this anti-Union Board feeling. In series of public meetings Sasmal along with other local leaders elaborately discussed the demerits of Union Boards and urged the newly elected members of Union Boards to resign.⁸⁹ But when their appeals to the Sub-Divisional Officer (S.D.O.) the District Magistrate (D.M.) the Chief Secretary, the Minister-in-Charge of Local Self-Government, and to the Members of the Bengal Legislative Council failed to revoke the notification regarding the extension of Union Boards to Contai Sub-division, Sasmal started a no-rent campaign. Villages under the able leadership of Sasmal decided to pay the *Choukidari* tax against *choukidari* receipt only, but no Union Board tax. Government officers helped by armed forces tried to intimidate villagers, attached


movable properties for failure to pay taxes, confiscated properties of as many as 35 thousand defaulters but could not remove confiscated goods of more than 4,000 defaulters in course of long four weeks' time, mainly because of total refusal by labourers and carters and want of buyers of such goods.⁹⁰ The 'government had to yield before this mass Satyagraha; all the 227 Union Boards were dissolved in the district of Midnapore and the government ordered the return of confiscated goods.

Non-cooperators in Bengal also succeeded in forming arbitration boards replacing government courts. The court fees and other paraphernalia attached to these courts were encumbering to the poor villagers, so they readily accepted the arbitration boards. In the district of Rangpur the non-cooperators had organised themselves under officers-in-charge of their own subdivisions and *thanas* with sufficient number of volunteers to make the working practicable. Their attempts were interpreted by the government as setting up of a parallel administrative machinery.⁹¹

While the first target of peasant-leaders had been the government, the next were the European landlords. The tenants under the Midnapore Zamindari Company were incited not to pay taxes to this European concern. Someswar Chaudhuri and Sailajananda Sen led respectively the peasants of Rajsahi and the tribals of Midnapore, who were all tenants of the Company. The trouble also spread to the Company's Zamindari in Murshidabad, as also in the neighbouring districts of Birbhum, Bogra and Pabna. Jitendralal Banerjee, Sasmal's counterpart in Birbhum, was leading peasants to resisting settlement operations there and to stop payment of increased taxes under the newly introduced Union Boards.⁹² Simultaneously a jute boycott campaign was launched by the non-cooperators. At Nagpur proposals were made for the formation of national unions for the pur-

chase and sale of all local produce without the agency of middlemen. The Mymensingh district congress committee issued a pamphlet on growing cotton instead of jute. Cultivators in Barisal were made to vow to restrict jute cultivation to one quarter of that of the previous year. At Harirampur in the Dacca district the area of jute cultivation was restricted to a little more than half an acre, while at Noakhali the crop of reluctant peasants was "ploughed up by striker students," as reported by the government, "who, in one instance played football on the ground afterwards."⁹³

Once the spirit of law-breaking was morally upheld by the leaders, it was difficult to limit it within bounds. Non-cooperation against European landlords was very soon turned against all categories of landlords. Landlords from U.P., themselves non-cooperators, complained to the Congress against rents being withheld from them. Complaints of intimidation by U.P. congressmen were also lodged to Gandhi by landholders there.⁹⁴ Krishnadas recorded the activities of a man called Motilal who had started a no-tax campaign in the native states of Rajasthan.⁹⁵ The Congress Working Committee passed a definite resolution that "the Congress did not desire that the dues of zamindars and landlords should in any case be withheld by their tenants," but nobody paid any heed to it. In Bengal situations proved no better than in U.P. or Rajasthan. The Additional Superintendent of Police (S.P.), Rangpur, informed that the tenants of Baharbund and Bhitarbund parganas in his district were withholding taxes in most cases, and had informed their landlord Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandi that they would not pay their dues even if the Maharaja would like to pay his revenue to the government.⁹⁶ The Commissioner of Chittagong Division noted that the President of the Comilla Congress Committee had to resign because he was not in favour of stopping of payment of taxes.⁹⁷



Besides withdrawal of payments, tenants took recourse to other acts that exasperated the government. At Jamalpur in Mymensingh a large number of *rayats*, without the consent of the zamindars, were reported to have established new *hats* (rural markets) close to the long-established government *hats*. Many of them also refrained from paying the *choukidari* tax. The Conservator of Forests, Bengal, reported of the destruction by non-cooperators of about half-a-dozen beat-houses and one forest bungalow in the hill-tracts of Chittagong. He also noticed a change of attitude among the villagers and pointed out that without the help of a very small section of friendly villagers, his party dared not enter the forests.⁹⁸ Apart from giving practical demonstration of the doctrines embodied in the Nagpur resolution, non-cooperators in Bengal succeeded in engendering a spirit of revolt against the bureaucracy, causing on the other hand a high degree of pressure and nervous strain to the latter. Had things been allowed to move on the same pace and spirit as they were begun, the nationalists could logically expect to prevail over the government, sooner or later. Unfortunately, the strange amalgum of westernised intellectuals, rich capitalists and landlords alongwith halfstarved peasants and labourers, that was the Indian National Congress, could not work out smoothly the plan laid down by visionary leaders. Controversies arose among different sections of congressmen, sometimes involving Gandhi himself, over the implementation of the various aspects of the programme. In spite of these dissensions, however, the non-cooperation movement in Bengal had hit the government hard by fall of revenue, caused by the temperance campaigns and peasants' reluctance to pay rents. Further, labour strikes created an uneasy and tense situation alongwith occasional stoppage of communication. At the end of the year, after prolonged tension and exhaustion, the government felt they could no longer carry on with

the same attitude of indifference to the movement and would have to yield to the virtue of necessity to decide whether to come to terms with the Congress, or to take the offensive against it, as the Prince of Wales' visit was in the offing. The government, however still remained at bay and took no active steps-

The Climacteric :

On 17 November the visiting Prince of Wales landed at Bombay. In terms of the Congress Working Committee meeting at Bombay in October to effect boycott of any public welcome to the Prince during his stay in India, the whole country observed *hartal* on the day of the Prince's landing. In Calcutta the *hartal* was very successful- the city wore a deserted look with all sorts of conveyance withdrawn and all shops closed. The highly organised congress volunteers were all attention to the incoming passengers of railway stations. "All day Subhas (Bose) attended to the arrival of trains at Howrah and Sealdah and helped in carrying children and women to their destination in the only car which bore placards 'On National Service' " - wrote an eye-witness.⁹⁹ Not even the government could but recognise the completeness of the *hartal* : "The *hartal* of the 17th of November had been made so complete that the business and legitimate activities of the citizens were in effect suspended. The volunteers attempted to usurp the functions of the regular police in the control of traffic."¹⁰⁰ The day passed in perfect peace in Calcutta while a five-day riot in Bombay and disturbances in other parts of India were reported. Almost all local governments were against the policy of indifference so long followed by the Government of India.¹⁰¹ After the 17 November *hartal* their nervousness increased and they brought sufficient pressure on the Government of India to take the offensive by arresting all eminent leaders of

the Congress. On 6 December, Das's son Chiraranjan along with four others were arrested for selling *Khaddar* and picketing foreign cloth shops. Next day Basanti Devi with some other lady volunteers were arrested for the same offence. Three days later Das himself with Azad, Sasmal and 150 volunteers were taken into custody. Instead of frightening the people these arrests invoked waves of new volunteers. On the part of the government this was certainly an unwise step. These arrests of peaceful volunteers, particularly of the ladies, estranged the Moderate opinion which had so long been on the government's side. The Rev. B.A. Nag, Honorary Secretary, National Liberal League, and Krishna Kumar Mitra, Secretary, Indian Association, lodged protests against indiscriminate arrests and government high-handedness.¹⁰²

The Viceroy was perhaps feeling uneasy at the unwise step taken under pressure. The Prince of Wales had been in India, and every city he visited, observed hartal, "The situation was going out of hand from the official point of view", remarked Subhas Bose, "The novelty of the tactics employed by the Congress had non-plussed the Government."¹⁰³ The Prince was due to arrive at Calcutta on 24 December. The complete and peaceful nature of the 17 November *hartal* only reminded the Viceroy of its spontaneity and the organising ability of its initiators. The arrest of the leaders might not cause the disintegration of the strike call on 24 December, contrarily the disorganised strike might lead to mob violence. So Reading began to think of coming to a compromise with the congress before that date. He himself came down to Calcutta for negotiations, Malaviya being the intermediary. The prospect of a compromise, initiated by the Viceroy himself, was hailed by Das as "the chance of a life-time." Gandhi and Motilal Nehru had contemplated a compromise as early as in May, when the Work-

ing Committee had met at Allahabad,¹⁰⁴ long before the agitation had gained the strength to corner the government. The Deputy Director, Intelligence Branch, quoting 'confidential and reliable information' wrote that their move (for a compromise with the government) was opposed by Muhammad Ali and Lajpat Rai "on the ground that the Government would not permit the continuance of the agitation while the compromise was under discussion, and if the agitation were allowed to subside, it would not be possible to revive it to the strength and the dimensions it had attained."¹⁰⁵ The December offer came at a moment auspicious for the congress. Das laid much hope on the offer made by the government to release all non-cooperators, lift the ban on Congress volunteers, and to meet in a Round Table Conference with nationalist leaders about the constitution of India, if only the Congress withdrew the movement, as also the *hartal* call on the day of the Prince's visit. "Rightly or wrongly . the Mahatma had promised *Swaraj* within one year. That year was coming to a close, "thought Das. "Barely a fortnight was left and within this short period something had to be achieved in order to save the face of the Congress and fulfil the Mahatma's promise regarding *Swaraj*. If a settlement was made before December 31st and all the political prisoners were released, it should appear to the popular imagination as a great triumph for the Congress. The Round Table Conference might or might not be a success, but if it failed and the Government refused to concede the popular demands—the Congress would resume the fight at any time."¹⁰⁶ Such analysis of the situation prompted Das and Azad to respond to Malaviya. A number of telegrams passed between Calcutta and Sabarmati, but Gandhi, so eager for a compromise in May, could not be persuaded to accept the Viceroy's offer in December. He, on the other hand, insisted on the release of the Ali Brothers,

who, the Viceroy held, were sentenced not in connection with the non-cooperation movement. Evidence is not lacking that Gandhi himself was not altogether unwilling to join a Round Table Conference at this stage. Jamnadas Dwarakadas communicated to Sapru Gandhi's willingness to attend such conference "called by Viceroy or any one without imposing any previous condition."¹⁰⁷ But finally he held back and imposed such conditions to which the government was not amenable. Weighing the balance between his Muslim and Marwari supporters, probably for the time being, Gandhi found it heavier on the Muslim side. In any case, he was not ready at that moment to lose the support of the Muslims by agreeing to a proposal that would result in the release of the non-cooperators, but not of the Ali Brothers. Within two months he suspended the movement unconditionally—a measure that would consolidate the support of both groups. He appeased the businessmen, on the one hand, by crying a halt,¹⁰⁸ and the Muslims, on the other, by leaving the question of release of prisoners open. So, in December, when the government felt itself to be in a tight corner and got ready to come down, it was Gandhi's acts which saved them from defeat. This decision of Gandhi brought to surface the old difference between him and Das, which was first apparent at Amritsar and Calcutta, but had remained submerged between Nagpur and Ahmedabad.

The Government found the necessary respite to try all the means of fighting back non-cooperation, such as remedial legislation whenever required, counter-propaganda and random prosecution of the non-cooperation agents. From November, 1921, they had been making full use of the last method; after the prince's visit was safely over, the bureaucracy became ruthless. Nothing happened on 31 December and the movement dragged on for further two months. Meanwhile the Congress session at Ahmedabad

made Gandhi the dictator, and his first act as dictator was the unilateral call for suspending the movement in utter disregard of the views of other leaders and sudden freeze of the boiling aspirations of the soldiers. What would have been an honourable settlement in December, amounted to an unconditional surrender in February. The rejection of the compromise offer and then surrender—those two acts cost Gandhi his claim to leadership in Bengal. Das was getting impatient of him, the immediate effect of the withdrawal brought to the fore his friction with the Gandhi-led Congress.

Reactions : Gandhi's :

The doctrine of the Nagpur resolution put into practice, landed many of Gandhi's supporters in difficulty. The Marwaris, who indeed tilted the balance in favour of Gandhi at the Calcutta session, now turned back and began to clamour for a halt through men like G.D. Birla, Sukhlal Karnani and Kesoram Poddar and stopped donating to the Tilak Swarajya Fund.¹⁰⁹ Debi Prosad Khaitan met Gandhi as the spokesman of the business community and said that Marwaris were businessmen and they could not afford to be ruined. The cloth boycott campaign, the Assam-Bengal Railway and Steamer strikes in favour of the tea-garden coolies and the boycott of foreign cloth though meant to hit the European business interest in jute, tea and cloth, also hit like a boomerang the Marwaris, who were intermediaries or agents or dealers. The Burrabazar Congress Committee was induced to apply for direct membership of the AICC independent of the BPCC and Das.¹¹⁰ Padamraj Jain questioned the propriety of utilising Swarajya fund for financing the strikes by coolies.¹¹¹

Motilal Nehru accused Das of misdirecting and actually retarding the proper non-cooperation movement and in Bengal Jitendralal Banerjee and Shyamsundar Chakravarti

criticised Das on the issues of: (1) the East Bengal strikes, (2) the enlistment of practising lawyers as members of Congress Committees, (3) giving of bail in certain cases by non-cooperators who had been prosecuted, and (4) the inclusion of members in the National Service Board who did not believe in non-violence.¹¹² About the East Bengal strikes Gandhi expressed his own feelings in the *Young India* of 15 June which was not in the least encouraging to Das. "Whoever instigated it did an ill-service to the labourers," Gandhi wrote. "In India we want no political strikes..The only way, therefore, we can help strikes, is to give them help and relief when they have struck for their own bonafide grievances. We must sedulously prevent all other strikes." In a meeting at Calcutta of Bengali Congressmen Gandhi was reported as regretting that Das had made a grievous mistake in supporting the strikes. But what had been done could not be helped—it was in this spirit that Gandhi asked the strikers either to return to their homes at the expense of the Tilak Swarajya Fund or to form a spinning colony for which the plant would be supplied by the BPCC.¹¹³ About issues 2 and 3 he expressed complete disapproval, and about the last he said that members of the National Service Board had assured him that they believed in nonviolence as a policy and that he preferred to allow them to remain on the Board till December.¹¹⁴

In fact, Gandhi himself did not approve many of the programmes undertaken by Bengali non-cooperators. In spite of continuous pleadings of Working Committee members he did not allow the launching of civil disobedience on the plea of unpreparedness to launch civil disobedience in any Congress district or province. "Civil non-payment of taxes is indeed the last stage in the non-cooperation"—he wrote in the *Young India* of 26 January, 1922, and he had definite directions in this regard. "Mahatmaji had decided to start

the campaign of non-payment of taxes at Bardoli," informed his secretary, "but at the same time he had been strongly advising that no such effort should be made in any other part of India without his express permission previously obtained."¹¹⁵ About the success of the Midnapore agitation led by Sasmal Krishna Das commented, "They little realised that this action (of mass civil disobedience relating to the non-payment of a cess) on their part was opposed to Mahatmaji's strategy that there should be no civil disobedience of an aggressive nature anywhere else in India when he was engaged in a struggle of that kind at Bardoli."¹¹⁶ The Working Committee meeting at Bombay in October authorised only civil disobedience by individuals who might be hindered in the prosecution of *Swadeshi* propaganda, provided that it was done under the authority of the provincial Congress Committee. The persistent and pronounced opposition of Gandhi and the working Committee against mass civil disobedience on the one hand and the staunch belief in it of some Congressmen in Bengal on the other, inevitably led to dissensions among the provincial Congress members. Sasmal was trying but unsuccessfully to persuade the Congress since its Nagpur session for launching a movement against Union Board provisions in the Village Self Government Acts.¹¹⁷ At the Bengal Provincial Conference at Barisal he got the resolution passed, but the BPCC Executive Council, presumably reluctant to go against the Congress mandate, resolved not to organise any movement against Union Board or *choukidari* taxes. So, Sasmal, failing to get "the blessing of the Mahatma and the active financial, moral and organisational support of the Congress, started organising the movement in his personal capacity and as a step independent of the Congress."¹¹⁸ Not unreasonably, therefore, that Bimalananda Sasmal, son of the reputed leader, was afflicted when the Congress claimed credit for the success

of the movement.¹¹⁹ Although the men Sasmal led were not non-cooperators,¹²⁰ the leader himself was a non-cooperator in the sense that he had suspended his practice as a barrister at the call of the Congress, and the success he achieved in an anti-government campaign was largely due to the atmosphere created by the non-cooperation movement. To Gandhi, however, the importance of the whole thing lay elsewhere. Even if the provincial committee did not give any substantial help to the movement, appreciation by leaders¹²¹ at its successful operation and later its incorporation as a part of the general non-cooperation movement¹²² were but expressions of their tacit support in the endeavour. Gandhi must have felt uneasy as he noticed Bengal situation going out of his hand. Sooner or later he would have to take the decision—whether to allow things to move in their own ways, or to suspend the movement altogether to keep the situation well under his own control.

Much to the chagrin of leaders and volunteers alike, Gandhi, at the turn of the year, decided to withdraw the movement. On 5 February, when Gandhi was giving a finishing touch to the preparations for the much-awaited no-rent campaign at Bardoli, an infuriated mob set fire to a police station at a village called Chauri-Chaura in U. P., killing a score of policemen lodged in the house. On the night of 11-12 February, Gandhi suddenly decided to put the brake on the movement, grounds being the desecrating upsurges in the sacred non-violent affray. Certainly a stray incident of violence at one corner of the country might not be the real or singular cause for the suspension of the movement. For in a similar instance in the Bombay riots, he did not suspend the movement though he wrote in the *Young India*, "The hope of reviving mass civil disobedience has once more in my opinion been dashed to pieces, the atmosphere for mass civil disobedience is absent,"¹²³ The incident at

Chauri-Chaura occurred at a time when Gandhi was searching heaven and earth for an excuse to put a stop to the movement before the one year's time granted to him for experimenting with his weapon lapsed. The Maharashtrian leaders were constantly voicing their outspoken differences with Gandhi's policy of delimiting the movement. V. J. Patel declared that after December he would follow his own course.¹²⁴ There were other reasons also. Great was the pressure put upon Gandhi by Marwari Congressmen of Bengal, who held the purse. Already in Calcutta some of the Marwaris had revoked their pledge of 17 September not to place fresh orders for foreign cloth till February, 1922. It was clear that a renewal of picketting of foreign cloth would lead to confrontation with the Marwari trading class, as warned by the latter's spokesman Padamraj Jain.¹²⁵ When the Marwaris refused to make over to Das a sum of Rs. 17,000 collected by them for the Swarajya Fund,¹²⁶ Das, in the impasse, declared that he would resume his practice and spend his earnings on the strikes.¹²⁷ These dissensions forebode ill of Congress unity and in these predicaments the Chauri-Chaura incident was a wind-fall for Gandhi and he seized it. Gandhi not only called off the much-placated Bardoli struggle but also any civil disobedience anywhere for the present.¹²⁸

Other Reactions : Desirability of Education Boycott

"The success of the non-cooperation movement (in Bengal) hung on the single-handed action of Das"—wrote a contemporary journalist.¹²⁹ His colossal sacrifice had induced men like Subhas Bose, J. M. Sengupta, Hemanta Sarkar and Sasmal to join, without whose efforts the movement would never have achieved the success it really had. His influence over the public was tremendous, so much so that 352 examinees in the Matriculation examination came

out of the hall in protest of the notice on Das not to enter the Mymensingh town and a *hartal* for 48 hours was spontaneously observed.¹³⁰ The number of volunteers for the campaign swelled to too appalling a figure for the government to take into custody in the jail and the improvised prison camps. The Government of India felt compelled to urge the Home Government to change its policies. "It is with the cooperation of the people of India that British rule in India hitherto has been carried on", wrote the Viceroy, "and it is essential for its continued success that there should be such cooperation". The Muslim alliance of the Congress was viewed as most dangerous by the government. "We desire to take this opportunity of reiterating our convictions as to the imperative necessity of conciliating Mahammedan opinion by the modification of Turkish Peace terms", continued Reading. "We believe that the appeasement of 70 million Mahammedans of India and consequent relief to a situation of real danger to the tranquility of India, is of utmost importance."¹³¹ Apart from losing Muslim loyalty, the Government of India did also watch with anxiety the penetration of the movement among the masses. "The non-cooperation movement has to a great extent been engendered and sustained by nationalist aspirations ..The lower classes in the towns have been seriously affected ; and although the influence of the movement has been much smaller in the rural tracts generally, in certain areas the peasantry have been affected, particularly in parts of Assam valley, U. P., Bihar and Orissa and Bengal."¹³² The Government of India were, however, satisfied that the army and the great majority of police were loyal,¹³³ still they did not "seek to minimise in any way the fact that great anxiety is caused by the situation." The Viceroy also noticed with apprehension that the movement had begun to draw besides the educated class "adherents from unemployed labourers, mill-hands and

city-rabble", and so, meant to put a check to these by the introduction of the Seditious Meetings Act in Punjab, Bihar, Bengal and Assam.¹³⁴

The review of the situation had been made by the Viceroy only three days before Gandhi decided to withdraw the movement. Reading had very correctly assessed, the favourable impact created by the movement on the masses, as also on a very large section of the rank and file of the Congress. But so far as the intellectual elite were concerned, the situation was not at all encouraging. The non-cooperation, debate at Calcutta evinced reluctance on the part of the leaders. It was by feeling the pulse of the country, which was bent for non-cooperation, that some of the elites had accepted it, only though as a temporary measure. Even Das, who allowed himself to float in the wave of non-cooperation, had reserved the question of Council-boycott for breaking with the Gandhians in no distant future. The effects of the movement have to be judged, therefore, at two levels. Where concerned with the masses, it was acclaimed as a definite success, but as regards the upper stratum of leadership, the movement achieved but apparent success, not beyond suspicions as to accompanying evils. In fact, the movement received just short of disapproval by the Bengali intelligentsia. They were bitterly critical of the education boycott campaign. To the President of the Nagpur Congress, C. Vijayaraghavachariar it would be an "unintentional and even an unconscious proposal to rebarbarise the people of India, by no means a very auspicious preparation to establish and maintain the democratical form of responsible Government."¹³⁵ Bengal bitterly remembered the abortive trials of nationalising education during the past *Swadeshi* campaign and so, except Dr. P. C. Ghosh, Hemanta Kumar Sarkar and a few others, the professors in general kept themselves aloof notwithstanding Gandhi's

deploration. Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, condemned the movement at the Senate : "It is clear that between 40,000 and 50,000 young boys below the college age have left schools, have been rendered idle, and have had their education interrupted if not finally brought to an end, at an age at which the time lost can hardly, if ever, be made up. This wastage amongst the young boys is nothing short of national calamity."¹³⁶ His attitude proved his farsight, as years later Jayakar wrote in his memoirs, "The students of Bengal will ever recall with gratitude that it was Asutosh who courageously prevented the collapse of the Calcutta University."¹³⁷ In his earnestness to bring Sir Asutosh to lead the national education movement Das even promised to give a crore of rupees from the national fund for running the University.¹³⁸ But the Vice-Chancellor seemed convinced that the boycott of educational institutions would not be popular in Bengal. He gave some hints to the Government from his past experience, about the aspirations of the nationalists : "In Partition days, when schools were being boycotted and national institutions set up, the question as to what constitutes 'national' in the case of a University was discussed and three essentials were agreed to—one, a foremost place to be given to Indian history and culture ; two, teaching to be in vernacular with English as a compulsory second language ; and, three, vocational courses to be instituted with a view to developing the resources and increasing the wealth of India".¹³⁹ Sir Asutosh did not allow any commotion to be created in the university, "There were some signs of trouble in the university classes," reported the Bengal Government, "but Sir Asutosh has ordered that the classes are to go on and that any student not attending will be turned out of the university masses."¹⁴⁰ Quite a number of leading personalities supported the Vice-Chancellor. Andrews, a common friend of Tagore

and Gandhi, wrote to Gandhi ; “We both (Andrews and Dwijendra Nath Tagore) doubt the wisdom of this form of action in the case of students. What I see now going on everywhere in Bengal is the evaporation of the first flush of enthusiasm. I am afraid, we shall see an immense number of students go back and no college nationalised at all”. He had the insight to see that “very few indeed have taken up village work actively and thoroughly. The *Charka* will not attract for long and *Hindustani* does not appeal.”¹⁴¹ An eminent journalist resounded the views of the Vice-Chancellor,—“The leaders of the non-cooperation movement are demanding too much sacrifice of the students. The students by giving up Government schools and colleges will have to lose the chances of education, because national schools and colleges are not adequate. They may have to lose the mental and moral equipment for the whole life.”¹⁴² *Swaraj* first and education after—that was Gandhi’s battle-cry. “But it was too hard for those to whom it was addressed”, wrote another journalist, “they had not bargained for so much sacrifice”.¹⁴³ In an article entitled *Non-cooperation in Education*, the editor of the *Modern Review* hinted at all the possible evils that might emerge. “The efforts of the non-cooperation leaders to establish schools and colleges, itself shows that all the boys and young men who have struck are not yet fit for the work of propaganda and social service in the country. Hence, if national educational institutions cannot be established in adequate numbers for their physical and mental development, their physical and mental disqualifications cannot be removed at all, or as early as may be desirable”, commented the editor. “According to the Congress resolution students must make a heavier sacrifice,” he continued, “and some of them a sacrifice of a character which would leave them comparatively ill-equipped for the battle of life and the bloodless war of independence”. The

same author giped at the way the non-cooperators prevented law-examinees from entering the examination hall. "We think this was undue interference with the liberty of non-strikers. The freedom which you want for yourselves, you should allow to others....The physical blocking of passages cannot be called the use of soul force."¹⁴⁴ This mordant comment was not uncalled for. *Satyagraha* and its moral force was too highly placated. India has ever revered ascetics and regarded them to have prophetic vision. Gandhi appeared in this image and that paved his way to leadership, whereas his doctrines of renunciation exposed by contrast--the Moderates as unpatriotic, power-crazy charity boys of the Government. Feeling the pulse of the country on the education boycott issue, the Moderates girt up their loins and retaliated by arraying their strength in counter-propaganda. At a meeting in connection with the School of Chemical Technology, Asutosh Chaudhuri, one of the Moderate politicians, advised young men "not to throw away all they had learnt, but to use their mental and physical resources for their own advancement and benefit of their country."¹⁴⁵ A Peace and Progress League was formed at Comilla to resist student involvement in politics.¹⁴⁶ Broomfield hints at this disinclination on the part of the Bengalees as offshoots of the pride of the "richness of their culture" and the tendency to cling to that,¹⁴⁷ but the burden of political memories of the *Swadeshi* days was no less important a factor. "In Bengal we have passed through the stage of non-cooperation. We practised it in the days of *Swadeshi* movement and anti-partition agitation. We were non-cooperators before the rest of India thought of it", wrote Surendranath.¹⁴⁸ Rather than deriving satisfaction, as suggested by Broomfield, "in the thought that the rest of India was now following a path which Bengal had trodden fifteen years before," Surendranath's apprehen-

sion about failures and waste as the doom on a larger national scale than in the anti-partition campaign, led Byomkesh Chakravarti, Chairman of the Reception Committee, Calcutta Special Congress, to express his doubts clearly: "The surrender of honorary offices, the settlement of disputes by private arbitration, the boycott of Legislative Councils, non-participation in government functions and vigorous prosecution of *Swadeshi* were some of the methods we pursued. Our experiences in Bengal in the past, I regret to say, do not justify us in taking a very hopeful view of the success of the non-cooperation programme now adumbrated."¹⁴⁰ Pal's echo in the same strain also made Bengal Wary.

Das's efforts at the establishment of an independent university at Dacca met with conspicuous failure. Before his death Das himself deplored that "national education was unrealisable without a national system of Government, and the boycott of the University was the weakest point in the new national propaganda."¹⁴¹

Tagore laid much hope on Gandhi's leadership and expressed joy at the excitement created by the non-cooperation movement. "Your last letter gives wonderful news about our students in Calcutta", he wrote to Andrews. "I hope that this spirit of sacrifice and willingness to suffer will grow in strength. We in India, shall have to show the world, what is truth, which not only makes disarmament possible, but turns it into strength. The moral force is a higher power than brute force, will be proved by the people who are unarmed." Later reflections exposed to him the dangers of the policy and so he sorrowfully, wrote: "I have been trying all these days to find in it a melody—but the idea of non-cooperation with its mighty volume of sound does not sing to me, its congregated menace of negation shouts. The idea of non-cooperation is potitical asceticism", he tried to find out a justification, if any, of the movement. "Our

students are bringing their offerings of sacrifice to what ? Not to a fuller education but to non-education. It has at its back a fierce joy of annihilation which at its best is asceticism, and at its worst that orgy of fightfulness in which the human nature losing faith in the basic reality of normal life, finds a disinterested delight in an unmeaning devastation". The poet's solemn warning, however, could not turn the tide. "During Swadeshi Movement", the poet sought to explain his stand, "the reason of my refusing to advise those students to leave their schools was because the anarchy of mere emptiness never tempts me, even when it is resorted to as a temporary measure. I am frightened of an abstraction which is ready to ignore living reality. I could not lightly take upon myself the tremendous responsibility of a mere negative programme for them which would uproot their life from its soil, however thin and poor that soil might be". He regretted the great injury and injustice done to the boys "who were tempted away from their career before any real provision was made,"^{1:1}

Gandhi pleaded his own case in the *Young India*. "I have never been able to make a fetish of literary training", he asserted. "My experience has proved to my satisfaction that literary training by itself adds not an inch to one's moral height and that character building is independent of literary training". Obviously, Bengal with her rich treasure of Western liberal education, could not as easily swallow Gandhi's arguments and so relieve herself of the tie with education as Gujarat and other provinces without such tradition could do. Answering the poet's alarm over the negative aspect of non-cooperation Gandhi said, "This deliberate refusal to cooperate is like the necessary weeding process that a cultivator has to resort to before he sows. Weeding is as necessary to agriculture as sowing."^{1:2} Surely Gandhi could not foresee the possibilities of removing a few seedlings

with weeds.

Such being the prevalent views in Bengal about non-cooperation in education, the leader of non-cooperation in the province accepted it as a necessary evil. To him such forebodings did not permit its continuance for long. Das therefore, offered to Sir Asutosh a crore of rupees for the nationalisation of the Calcutta University and a lakh by a sale of his own house, to Sir P. C. Roy to lead the national education movement and set up a national laboratory. The Acharya, of course, had plainly said that the idea of bringing *Swaraj* through spinning was sheer madness.¹⁵³ So, despite great enthusiasm created at the start, the movement eventually proved to be a nightmare, and the one-hundred and seventy national schools, established throughout Bengal were facing inglorious ends, when, in 1924, "only seventy of them were scraping along with meagre support."¹⁵⁴ The students had enough of disillusionment at the end of the year, when they found themselves in total disarray. They had lost one vital year in their career ; their spontaneous response fizzled out due to the lack of conviction on the part of the leaders themselves.¹⁵⁵ With no jobs to live upon, nor a call as volunteer, for the movement had been withdrawn, theirs remained only the inglorious prospect of returning to the old schools and colleges. A journalist, who had expressed his doubts about non-cooperation, gave his own formula for the success of the movement—"Non-cooperation, in order to be truly constructive, must, *first* order its young votaries to *complete* their *education*, so that they may become *fully* trained teachers, and not raw enthusiasts with incomplete education. . Our *national education* should be conducted in *close connection with modern knowledge*, modern arts, and modern avenues of employment 'Education may wait, but not *Swaraj*'. commented the journalist disdainfully, "as if *Swaraj* without full education could be gained ~~in~~ year or

defended for a day even.¹⁵⁶

Gandhi's promise of *Swaraj* within one year impressed very few in Bengal outside the student community. "Mr. Gandhi's crore of rupees will not get us *Swaraj* before we are able to stand on our own legs", wrote Surendranath sarcastically. "Now *Swaraj* will mean a Shaukat Ali-cum-Das regime."¹⁵⁷ Tagore, imputed deception implied in fixing precise and early dates for obtaining *Swaraj* when all the leaders were aware of its impossibility. "He was shocked to see the best, the most sensible men of his people swept aside instantly by this contagious credulity," wrote Romain Rolland. "Sarat Chandra Chatterjee whom he (Tagore) sees as the greatest living Bengali artist and a man of high conscience was eagerly awaiting the miraculous date, and he refused to argue about the matter with Tagore, because, he said, it was a bad thing even to doubt."¹⁵⁸ Sarat Chandra's might have been a singular case, but the mood in general was one of utter scepticism. "Nature has not endowed me with the robust optimism of Mr. Gandhi"—wrote one correspondent, "who believes that the freedom of a vast continent like India can be attained within nine months. *Swaraj* is too precious a thing to come so soon."¹⁵⁹ Gandhi appeared to be supremely unpractical in the eyes of Bengali politicians, who believed that there was no room in politics for the unpractical. To the Moderates' questions: "Are you sure that, if you give up titles the Government will suffer? If you resign your seats on Municipalities, District Boards, Legislative Councils etc, no other countrymen of years will jump into your vacancies." If you withdraw, will you not throw away all that the country has taken nearly fifty years to win?"¹⁶⁰ The non-cooperators, led by emotion, not by logic, had no convincing reply. That invited the stronger criticisms from the Moderates through the pen of Ambica Charan Mazumdar: "In denouncing the bureaucracy the

non-cooperators have set up a dictatorship more arbitrary, autocratic and dogmatic than any bureaucracy can be. In condemning what they call 'slave mentality' in others, they have surrendered their own judgement hoodwinked at the mandate of one man, however illogical and preposterous such a mandate may be."¹⁶¹ Richard Gordon may well be right to see Das's support for non-cooperation (even in such a situation in Bengal) as a move to prevent Gandhi from usurping complete command of the movement. "So long as you choose to keep me as your leader you must accept my conditions, you must accept dictatorship and the discipline of martial law"—was the demand of Gandhi and this demand for abject surrender was shocking to Bengal who with her rich and varied political tradition, never felt the necessity of dictatorial leadership. Dissensions and differences of opinion, as Das later said, were signs of healthy growth of political thinking.¹⁶² "During my journey back to India—I had decided to cooperate, with this movement by my writings and action," wrote Tagore. "But back in India I scented an atmosphere which overwhelmed me. The first sickness which appeared to me was tyranny over the minds of the people. You know that the spirit of our people tends naturally to inertia and traditionalism; it now has moral despotism imposed on it in addition; very few have the courage to express opinions contrary to current views; in other words, I found that the political current is hostile to liberty."¹⁶³ With all regards for Das who compromised with Gandhi at Nagpur, Pal wrote; "Blind reverence for Gandhiji's leadership would kill people's freedom of thought and would paralyse by the deadweight of unreasoning reverence their individual conscience."¹⁶⁴

Knowing the fascination of the Indian people about things concerned with religion Gandhi cleverly added religious tinge in the doctrines he preached. Foreign cloths he

branded as impure objects and so should be boycotted. He well knew that economic reasons would fail to impress them. "Do you really believe there are 'impure' objects?"—Tagore pained by this exploitation of the gullible masses, asked Gandhi, who promptly answered that Indian people were touched only by religious reasons. "This means that Indian people need lies, and if the people need lies, they have no right to liberty," exclaimed the poet.¹⁶⁵ The Moderates denounced Gandhi as a religious preacher usurping political leadership. "Gandhi stands as the high priest of renunciation", wrote one of them, "and as far as it is given to men of humbler clay like ourselves to understand things in the light of history and experience, Gandhi appears by very reason of his renunciatory creed to be marked out as the custodian of his religious as distinguished from political concerns."¹⁶⁶ But Gandhi's position was little short of desperation. What else could he do but appeal to religious sentiment, when even intellectuals would not be impressed by economic reasons? "Among all the foreign goods used in India, foreign cloth had most vitally injured the country", wrote Gandhi, "Out of total imports of 157 crores of rupees, nearly 60 crores, i. e., more than 1/3 consisted of foreign cloth. Revival of hand-spinning", he went on, "alone can solve the ever-growing problem of the deepening poverty of the dumb millions who starve only because of want of occupation."¹⁶⁷ His arguments made little appeal to the intellectual service holders and zamindars who dominated the the BPCC. Objections were raised from various angles. Some stigmatised it as a ruse and saw in it systematized profiteering ends of Bombay mill-owners.¹⁶⁸ Barisal DCC put the awkward question: "If imports are stopped, export will also stop and Indian trades will be ruined. Do you desire this?"¹⁶⁹ The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* asked what would the world famous Bengali weavers do who made cloth

out of foreign thread.¹⁷⁰ The cult of charka did not touch the sophisticated Bengali mind, who remained indifferent to Gandhi's insistence on making charka a symbol—a symbol of diligence, equity and economic self-help. “I have always looked upon the Charka from the point of view of character and religion. It brings rich and poor together and sanctifies handlabour,” wrote Andrews, but knowing as he did the Bengalis, asserted that “it certainly will not hold Bengali students by itself, month after month, year after year.”¹⁷¹ Rolland justified charka, as an ideal. “It (human mind) needs an ideal within its reach”, he wrote, “an ideal whose practice is easy and work a day, an ideal which can be achieved by men's hands. It is in this sense that I believe Gandhi's Charka useful despite everything, like the more or less mechanical exercises of the monastic orders”.¹⁷² Rolland even complained of incessant criticisms of Charka by Tagore.¹⁷³ “I went to C. R. Das about village work and he was doubtful,” informed Andrews.¹⁷⁴ These crosscurrents of thoughts over Charka and village work pervaded Bengal's political intellectuals who were equally unhappy over the boycott of education issue and Khilafat alliance, which we discuss below.

Colloquium on Khilafat :

The Khilafat and non-cooperation agitations complemented each other. Hindu-Muslim concord and unity reached the pinnacle in 1921, when “urdu-speaking Muslims toured up-country Hindu areas of the city (of Calcutta) distributing gifts” during the Hindu festival of Dewali, and Fazlul Huq and Mujibar Rahman joined the Marwari festival of ‘Pinjra-pole’ and the Jain Parswanath procession.¹⁷⁵ Das and Huq issued a manifesto asking members of both communities to boycott the Peace celebrations organised by the bureaucracy, because the peace was going to dismantle the Khalifa's

empire. Organised by Akram Khan and Maniruzzaman Islamabadi the boycott was a great success in Calcutta where Marwari and Bengali shopkeepers closed their shops and joined the boycott processions. On 19 March a second *hartal* was organised that met with almost same success, with Muslim and Marwari shops closed, dockyards paralysed, industrial plants closed and taxis and carriages stayed off the road, but Bengali shopkeepers did not close their shops.¹⁷⁶

This significant aloofness was to register their protests for mixing religion with politics. Secret I. B. Reports showed that Bihari and up-country Hindus and Marwaris had full sympathy but the Bengali Hindu kept aloof from the Peace Celebrations boycott procession¹⁷⁷ With "the deepest sympathy for Turkey in her troubles and the effort of our Muhammedan fellow countrymen on behalf of the Sultan... We must dissociate ourselves from the movement," wrote the Moderate organ *The Bengalee*, as "given effect to it will be fraught with the most deplorable consequences."¹⁷⁸ "Non-cooperation will be justified only when a question is purely Indian and its decision depends wholly on the Government of India and the Secretary of State", wrote a correspondent, "The Khilafat question is a world question depending for its settlement on many others besides the British Government."¹⁷⁹ The Bengali Hindu Press expressed doubts about the success of the Khilafat agitation.¹⁸⁰ The editor of *The Bengalee* forewarning of explosion of the mixture of religion with politics, asked "when the fervour of religion and all that it implies will come into active and vigorous operation .. will the the leaders be able to regulate and control these forces ?"¹⁸¹ Tagore regretted the mix up of the nationalist cause with such religious impetuosity as the Khilafat agitation. He complained, "Gandhi was not working . for the unity of India, but for the pride and force of Islam ; factors which are at present emerging in violent

Hindu-Muslim disturbances, of which the latter, cunningly supported by the British Government, are the instigators."¹⁸² Tiding over such general trend in the province, the non-cooperation movement in Bengal along with the strikes associated with the Khilafat issue attained success whatever it had, only by the personality and leadership of Das. Like the Moderates, Tilak also doubted the pragmatism in aligning nationalist politics with the Khilafat issue. Jayakar writes that Tilak "foresaw the frightful consequences resulting from accepting the Khilafat dispute and he warned us all against it."¹⁸³ Gandhi explained, "I felt that if I could but show my loyalty to my Mussalman countrymen in the hour of their trial, I would be able to secure everlasting friendship between the two great communities. It is not—it need not be—anti-Indian or anti-Hindu."¹⁸⁴ He went on supporting the Ali Brothers who were not only speaking in discordant but in inimical strains also. In March 1921, at Madras, Muhammad Ali went so far as to say that he would readily assist an Afghan army invading India.¹⁸⁵ Gandhi rose to explain in the *Young India*, "I would, in a sense, certainly assist the Amir of Afghanistan if he waged war against the British Government; that is to say it would be a crime to help the government which has lost the confidence of the nation to remain in power."¹⁸⁶ He seemed to remain undisturbed even when blowing hot and cold in the same breath Muhammad Ali, while addressing the Madras Presidency Volunteer Corps, the I. B. Reports show, "often urging the necessity of passive methods, referred to the success achieved by the Irish people in their struggle for independence, which, he said, was due to the splendid organisation of the Irish Volunteer Corps."¹⁸⁷ Violent demonstrations of the Khilafat volunteers, their physical obstruction to Police search of the Khilafat committee at Madras¹⁸⁸ were offshoots of "Pan-Islamism", which the government

reported, "were opposed to the idea of true nationalism. A large section of the Hindus was being steadily alienated from the non-cooperation movement by the manifest religious intolerance and Pan-Islamic aims of its extreme Mussalman supporters. The reiterated assertions of the Ali Brothers that they were Muslims first and everything else afterwards, excited genuine alarm among many of those who had been most actively in sympathy with their cause".¹⁸⁹ For, the Khilafat movement, as it gathered strength, claimed the sympathy of the Muslim Moderates like the Aga Khan.¹⁹⁰ The Hindu Moderates on the other hand were alienated. The Bengal Muslims comprising the rural peasantry mostly for their preponderant linguistic and cultural difference from Urdu-speaking up-country Muslims who claimed direct links with the birthplace of Islam, remained indifferent except in the Metropolis, where the up-country Muslims raised the hue and cry there. "The only Muhammadan organisation which at this time desired or dared to assert itself in the opposite direction, was the Bengal Muhammadan Association", informed the Deputy Director, Intelligence Branch, "which published a declaration that it would preach the advantages and benefits of loyal cooperation to save the Muslim community from the foolish and nauseating movement of Mr. Gandhi."¹⁹¹ But, the influence of the Ulema had always been great over the Muslim masses and so when at least one thousand *Ulema*, *Fazels* and such other holy Muslims, who had so long disdained the Congress as a Hindu institution, attended the Calcutta special session of the Congress, the prospects of non-cooperation and Khilafat movements brightened. In spite of the compromising attitude of a particular section of the Bengali Muslim Press, therefore, the rather stronger anti-British stand, taken by *Choltan* and *Al Eslam* began to attract wide popular support.¹⁹²

The amount of success brought about by this Hindu-

Muslim collaboration has been estimated in the previous pages. The Khilafat movement was dependent to a very great extent on Congress support, and the Bardoli resolution in February, 1922, had its immediate repercussions on the Khilafatists. They were extremely disappointed. "Muslim public began to feel", noted the government, "that they had been utilized merely to further the Hindu aim of *Swaraj* for India."¹⁰³ The word *Swaraj* was interpreted as "Swa" or ashes for the Muslims and 'Raj' for the Hindus.¹⁰⁴ Signs of Hindu-Muslim friction were evident. A telegram attached to the Civil and Military Gazette, published in March, 1922, reported Hazrat Mohani's grievances against Gandhi. He enquired why Gandhi himself had not been arrested and claimed that although the proportion of Hindus to Muhammedans in India was four to one, yet ninety five percent of those who had gone to jail in connection with the agitation were Muhammedans.¹⁰⁵ This might have been a distortion of facts to suit the Government propaganda, nevertheless, signs of strained relations between the Congress and Khilafatists were visible. "I cannot but help reminding Mr. Gandhi", wrote Kidwai, "that his programme of removing untouchability or picketting liquor shops or boycotting Councils and Universities or even of wearing nothing but Khaddar cannot have the slightest effect on the Khilafat question. The idea of converting all Indian Muslims to Jainist beliefs may be a very good method of solving the Khilafat question for India, but fortunately for Islam it is not practicable."¹⁰⁶ The letter showed Kidwai's scepticism about Gandhi's methods. After Bardoli a few Khilafat volunteers continued their activity at Ludhiana by picketting liquor shops ; at Peshawar they renewed their zeal in effecting a complete *hartal* on 6 March, the day of the Prince of Wales, visit there. On the whole, the immediate aftermath of Bardoli was the increasing sign of embittered Hindu-Muslim rela-

tions. Considerable dissension arose within the Khilafat organisations themselves over allegations of misappropriation of funds, as also over the question about the attitude to be taken towards the congress. Some of them could only find out the folly of joining the non-cooperation movement. "It is doubtful whether even the next fifty years will remedy the utter decline in its sense of nationhood, its principles and its religion and also the terrible catastrophe that fell upon the Indian Muslim community during those four years (1920-24) as a result of non-cooperation", declared the *Islam Darsan*, completely ignoring the Hindu sympathy for their Muslim brethren in their extra-territorial loyalty. The writer attacked Khilafat leaders like Mohammed Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Ansari as worshippers of Hindus.¹⁹⁷ When the anti-government agitations subsided, government agents found their opportunity to hold sway over the frustrated masses and refashion public opinion in favour of the government. Sir Abdur Rahim appeared on the stage of Hindu-Muslim relationship as the hero of Muslim interest in Bengal.

Achievements :

The decision of the Congress Working Committee at Bardoli on 12 February, 1922, ended the first phase of the nationalist struggle led by Gandhi known as the Non-Cooperation Movement. Along with the ultimate aim of Indian independence or *Swaraj*, the movement was launched with specific objectives like righting the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs, renunciation of titles, nationalisation of education, formation of *panchayats* as an alternative to British law courts and boycott of foreign cloth. The Bardoli resolution suspended the movement when it had not yet achieved any of these aims. British domination was there with as much power and authority as the rulers liked. The authority made

no apology for Punjab wrongs, nor did they do anything to appease Muslim religious sentiment, excited over the Khilafat issue. Boycott of schools, colleges and courts was only a temporary achievement, and even that was not total. The no-rent campaign could not be started at all. Though a prolonged country-wide debate, discussion and deliberation heralded it, the movement started by Gandhi with inexplicable hurry remained in operation for too short a period. The campaign might have reached a better end had its initiator abided by the wiser counsels of Bipin Pal that the movement should be launched after the people were trained up. The vagueness and want of clarity in Gandhi's plans had been recorded by Subhas Bose with regrets.¹⁰⁸ The absence of a pre-arranged strategy is strikingly noticeable in the constant switching of emphasis from one programme to another which had been a major weakness of the campaign that ultimately ended it in failure. It showed that the leader himself was unsure of the path he was asking his people to tread. This was however, unavoidable, due to the plurality of the Indian National Congress. To retain leadership Gandhi wanted to please all these divergent and conflicting interests. He did so by emphasising different objectives in short spells during the non-cooperation campaign. As a pragmatist he formulated his programme with a swing in favour of the capitalists who saw in it realisation of their interests. The reasons why he failed to offer any clear promise to the masses, while he preached once the doctrines of 'buy Indian' and 'dignity of labour', condemned the labour strikes, are therefore obvious. If the masses had not yet been consciously awakened to their class-interests, not all their leaders were ready to accept deceit so the inevitable precipitated. The Marwari capitalists who were the stimulators of the movement and main donors to the *Swarajya* fund, driven by the forward profit motive and the Bengali

intellectuals with the host of middle class Bengali youths and students, who may be said to be the executors of the movement driven by pure idealism, came to clash no sooner. "The Gandhi movement will no doubt collapse by internal disruption", forewarned Sir Sankaran Nair, "as it is composed of various elements drawn from Tolstoy, Lenin Communism, Socialism, rigid Brahminism, militant Mohammadianism, mutually repellant and explosive when they come into contact with one another."· 9 · The movement was called off, all of a sudden and despair and frustration benumbed the soldiers, the executors.

Indian nationalist cause suffered a grievous set back. The artificially jointed elements revealed in clear outlines their distinctions, as if after hibernation. The intellectuals lost all hopes (which they had reposed) in Gandhi's leadership. The students, with heads down and hopes of *Swaraj* within a year razed to the ground, resumed rejuvenating their secret revolutionary organisations. The aborted Khilafat movement marked not only the end of Hindu-Muslim unity but offered inspiration to the Muslim community, barring a very few Muslim nationalists, to break ties with the Congress and swear allegiance to the communalist organisations. Fazlul Huq in Bengal took this opportunity and assembled the Muslim peasantry under the banner of his Proja Party. Das and Motilal Nehru rallied the disgruntled Congress and nationalist members under the All-India Swaraj Party.

Throughout 1922, the country remained deeply involved in the question of 'to or not to enter the Council'.

2. The Heresy of Council Entry

Bardoli and after :

Das used to say about Gandhi, reported his beloved disciple, that "the Mahatma opens a campaign in brilliant fashion ; he works it up with unerring skill ; he moves from success to success till he reaches the zenith of his campaign—but after that he loses his nerve and begins to falter."¹ Das's view was shared by many in the Congress when Gandhi decided to suspend the non-cooperation movement in February, 1922. The decision was taken over an incident of mob violence. The police atrocities during the movement were without any parallel.² Under such provocations there was every possibility that the people would rise for a revenge. The incident that occurred at Chauri-Chaura was nothing more than that. But the attitude of revenge, as Gandhi thought it, was a disqualification for a Satyagrahi, and an act of violence was a severe breach of discipline on the part of the army of a non-violent struggle. When the army broke its discipline it was no longer possible to carry on the fight with its help—this was the professed logic behind the decision of unconditional surrender to the enemy which Gandhi took at Bardoli.

Admittedly there was logic in his move. But Gandhi's stand on similar incidents of violence earlier during the movement invited critics to say that the same logic should have applied then also.³ The Bardoli decision was most unfortunate and came at the most inopportune moment—said the imprisoned non-cooperation leaders. Das's angry comment was that Gandhi "bungled and mismanaged" the situation, and Lajpat Rai wrote a seventy page letter from

the jail. Gandhi's justifications apparently failed to touch the people and "almost everyone, young and old, declared with one united voice that it was unthinkable to suspend the fight at that stage." The deep dejection created by the decision has been described by Krishna Das. He notes that the excitement, disappointment and consequent spirit of revolt had been most pronounced among the Bengalis.⁴ "The general feeling will be one of relief" wrote one of the leading dailies of Bengal, "for the tension is already very great. But that will at the same time be a damper to the enthusiasm of many and may also cause widespread disappointment. Was it impossible to imagine", continued the paper, "that human patience, even in India, has its limits and that wanton shootings, indiscriminate assaults etc. would eventually goad the sufferers to retaliation? If all these could be foreseen, why was so much suffering invited for the people?"⁵ Letters began to pour in from all parts of the country criticising and blaming the Mahatma for the sudden suspension of the aggressive side of the non-cooperation programme. Swami Sraddhanand raised the cry that "it was not possible during a period of political turmoil to keep the peace throughout a vast country like India."⁶ On his arrival at Delhi, noted one of Gandhi's secretaries, "Mahatmaji found that even those whom he regarded as pillars of the movement had ranged themselves against the decision arrived at Bardoli."⁷ The resolutions of the AICC meeting at Delhi, confirming the Bardoli decisions were also confirmed by Provincial Congress Committees, but "this confirmation was the result of the necessity to appear loyal to the Central body", as pointed out by the I. B., "and not from any real desire to refrain from civil disobedience."⁸ In fact disillusion was about the leader and not about non-cooperation and civil disobedience as effective weapons. Rather provincial leaders urged Gandhi for a sanction to

continue the struggle at least on provincial level. The BPCC was ready to start civil disobedience against the Criminal Law Amendment Act when the decision at Bardoli put a stop to such activities. Unless the All India Congress Committee recognises provincial autonomy in provincial matters", informed Basanti Devi, "there is likely to be a revolt in Bengal. The Criminal Law Amendment Act is a provincial question. Bengal has every right to fight it in any way she thinks best. I repeat", she asserted, "Bengal has the right to adopt any means which is moral and non-violent ..."⁹

The fire furiously ablaze during the movement of 1921-22 could not be extinguished all on sudden by a decision of the leader. The forces continued on their own momentum even when the leader went to retirement in his '*ashrama*' or removed from the field to government prisons. The movement collapsed leaving in its trail the strong impress of Satyagraha as a potent weapon to deal with social and political evils. The decade of the twenties and the early years of the thirties witnessed therefore many Satyagraha campaigns led in different parts of the country by leaders belonging to the Indian National Congress. Emulating the Sikh movement for reform of *Gurudwaras*, which had been initiated during the non-cooperation movement (1921-22), the Bengal Swarajists started Satyagraha at the Temple at Tarakeswar in 1924-25. Peasants at Mulsipeta in Maharashtra started Satyagraha against forcible evacuation of land ; at Rajsahi in Bengal peasants of Brikutsa village rose in rebellion against the oppression of the zamindar and led a Satyagraha campaign there. Satin Sen led a Satyagraha by peasants of Patuakhali against the introduction of Union Board there. Vaikom Satyagraha for the vindication of civil right of the untouchables and the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha of 1923 were events that accumulated fame.¹⁰ The masses got initiated to the doctrine, and so was the lower level of leadership. Jute boycott campaigns were continued

in Bengal villages ¹¹ even after the suspension of the all-India movement by Congress volunteers who had a clear understanding of the potentials of such campaigns.

The discipline and viability of the army Gandhi was leading, its relative forbearance against the enemy's, and the long and short-term effects the movement was producing over the people, should be considered before passing concluding remark on the nature of Gandhi's Judgment. The effect of the decision, at least in one direction, was clear and precise that it disjointed the heterogeneous elements so long working in an artificial homogeneity. The first dissenting tone was heard on the shelved question of council boycott. The strongest opposition to the inclusion of council-boycott in the non-cooperation programme came both at Calcutta and Nagpur, from the Bengal and Maharashtra politicians. So long as the terms of the compromise between Gandhi and these leaders had remained unpublished, there were wild speculations about the possible reasons of the latter's conversion; but as soon as their private letters and papers came to light, the motive behind their opposition first and acceptance of the non-cooperation programme along with their contended council-boycott later, explained itself. These leaders had accepted non-cooperation for just a year during which Gandhi promised to bring Swaraj for India. This one year was the intervening period between the elections held in November, 1920 and those to be held again in November, 1923. The Congress began debating the issue in September 1920, and came to a decision at the end of the year, while in the meantime the elections were over. The views of the leaders should be considered in this context. Motilal was the first to join non-cooperation—his change of heart at Calcutta was based on his guess that the preparations of the U.P. Congress for the elections were not adequate; "it was absolutely certain that it would not possibly get a majority"—he

wrote.¹² Those provinces which expected favourable results in the elections, viz., Maharastra, the C.P. and Bengal, held strongly against the Council-boycott scheme at Calcutta.¹³ About Das's conversion to a non-cooperationist there is no room for any conjecture. He had never changed his mind about Council-entry. At Calcutta he opposed the non-cooperation resolution with the rejoinder of Council-boycott with it, and at Nagpur he supported the main resolution on non-cooperation because it was no more saddled with the Council-boycott clause. "It was at my instance", wrote Das, "that the clause with regard to the boycott of Councils was removed because at the time of Nagpur session the elections were practically over, I insisted on the removal of the clause, because otherwise, I said, I would not support the resolution."¹⁴ Incidentally, it may be pointed out that Gandhi himself did not think of including boycott of councils in the non-cooperation programme till Lala Lajpat Rai advocated the principle in his Urdu journal, *Bande Mataram*.¹⁵ We must not forget that at Amritsar Gandhi argued in favour of the Reforms. "He even insisted on thanking Montagu for the Reforms"—noted one of the modern historians.¹⁶ As late as in June, 1920, leaders of all parties met at Allahabad and reaffirmed the four stages of non-cooperation, already approved by the Central Khilafat Committee. These successive stages being the resignation of titles and honorary posts; the resignation of posts in civil services of Government, (the police being excluded) ; the resignation of services in the Police and the Army ; and, the refusal to pay taxes. There is no reference whatsoever, to the boycott of the Reformed Councils. However, the elections were over in November, 1920, and Das agreed to move the non-cooperation resolution without the council-boycott clause in December. The compromise was effective for a brief period, because Das and others who were keen to contest the elections of 1923,

required the time for necessary preparations. This explains on the one hand Das's urge for coming to an understanding with the Viceroy in December, 1921 ; and why on the other, Gandhi insisted on the attainment of *Swaraj* within twelve months. The non-cooperation movement was led most successfully in Bengal and it was almost impossible to continue it without the mature leadership of Das and the disciplined volunteers of Bengal. It should be remembered in this connection that Bengal, in spite of her want of faith in non-violence, remained non-violent, while violent outbreaks marred the non-cooperation movement in other provinces. If at the end of the year Das ended the compromise and started election campaigns with the help of the volunteers who had joined the Congress at his instance, the movement would surely have petered out. This was a possibility Gandhi did not overlook and that partially accounted for the decision at Bardoli. But indignation expressed at the decision was massive and had almost eclipsed the claim of Gandhi's leadership. Indeed, the government came to his rescue by cleverly arresting him. The wane of Gandhi's popularity was marked by the absence of any untoward incident at his arrest and conviction. Although he had advised that there should be no *hartals* or demonstration, the government noticed "extraordinarily little excitement" over Gandhi's arrest. In Bengal, Bengali Hindus made themselves conspicuous by their absence in the protest meetings and demonstrations. "The tramway service in the northern part of Calcutta was seriously interfered with" reported the Police Commissioner, "most of the offenders were small boys of Marwari and Bhatia castes with a sprinkle of Muhammaddans." A protest meeting, 6000 strong, was attended mostly by Marwaris, Bhatias and up-countrymen, with the only Bengali speaker Byomkesh Chakravarti.¹⁷

The Council-entry party found their opportunity.

They were no more bound by the decisions of the Nagpur Congress. The Bardoli decision had created a vacuum in the programme of the nationalist movement allowing the minority at the Calcutta Congress to present theirs. It is interesting to note that the Congress session at Ahmedabad, only two months back, had seen the highwatermark of Gandhi's power and prestige. "At Ahmedabad the Congress threw away the conventions of British legacy"—wrote a journalist. "Chairs and tables gave way to the traditional Indian system of squatting on the floor. Handspun Khadi was used for all the decorations and since most of the delegates and visitors wore Khadi the atmosphere was that of a gathering of village folk, a *panchayat*,"¹⁸ in sharp contrast to the usual scene in the previous sessions "where morning coats and well-pressed trousers were greatly in evidence."¹⁹ However, on the withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement the adherents of Council-entry started inter-provincial negotiations. Das in the Alipore jails discussed with his fellow prisoners his idea of Congressmen entering the Councils in large numbers to undo the decisions of the Government by outvoting it.²⁰ That would, he thought, not only out counter the principle of non-cooperation, but rather, he argued, the election campaigns would provide the Congress with an occasion and an opportunity for doing its propaganda simultaneously all over the country."²¹ His idea included the capture of all local bodies like the Municipalities and District Boards by the Congress "He predicted", wrote Azad, one of the convert advocates of Council-entry, "that the first step towards Indian independence would be the achievement of provincial autonomy. It is a measure of Das's farsight and vision that it was on these lines that the Government of India Act, 1935, was passed almost ten years after his death."²² Not only of Das, this was the general view

adopted by most of the leaders in the pre-Gandhi era. Their firm stand against Council-boycott issue was influenced by the urge for getting provincial autonomy. The Bengal Provincial Committee at its general meeting resolved on 15 August, 1920, just on the eve of the special session of the Congress that while accepting the principles of non-cooperation, there should be a large number of Congressmen in the new legislative bodies also, to resort to non-cooperation within the Council.²³ This view had all through been prevalent in Bengal. Leading newspapers, even a votery of the non-cooperation scheme like the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, did not agree with the Council-boycott clause, but rather pleaded for the capture of the legislative organs by nationalists.²⁴ When the issue was being debated and discussed throughout the country, a Muslim journal, which was for non-cooperation, regretted that "all the Hindu nationalists in Bengal are busily engaged in achieving success at the coming elections. They are of opinion," went on the editor, "that if they are successful in gaining seats in the Council, they would be able to help the movement by making Government impossible."²⁵ All these showed that the idea of obstruction in the Sinn Fein way had captured the leaders of the province.

Das's views were communicated to Motilal Nehru through J.M. Sengupta, who was the first to be released in Bengal. In April Das's wife Basanti Devi, as President of the provincial conference at Chittagong gave expression to the ideas cherished by her husband. Although the issue created an immediate split among Congressmen in Bengal, it may be safely asserted that the bulk was on the Council-entry side, laying little importance on the boycott of courts and councils. "It is significant", informed one of the Mahastrian Congressmen, "that the Bengal Congress Committee is reported to have placed second on its list of three nominees for the Presidentship of the Gaya Congress, Mr. S. Srinivasa

Iyenger, the late Advocate General of Madras, who, so far as I know, has not given up his legal practice.”²⁶ The first nominee of the Committee was Das, the leader of the pro-changers (Congressmen in favour of Council-entry). In the meantime Das and Motilal Nehru had made up their minds for advocating the cause of Council-entry, because the evils of boycotting the Councils had come true to their premonition. In the absence of the nationalists, the legislature then was filled by pre-government members and the government had an easy time in legalising any repressive measure against the nationalists. The ban on Congress volunteers, indiscriminate arrests and Police atrocities could have been checked had the spokesmen for nationalists been there. Besides the way in which Sri Surendranath behaved under the “intoxicating fumes of power and authority was not only derogatory to the hero of yesteryears, but also anti-national in spirit.” In the affairs of the Transferred subjects, since the decision of the Council was final, the votes of the nationalists could have reduced the overblown salaries of Ministers, as was the current Indian opinion. The failure of the government to sanction sufficient fund for relief operation for the flood victims of North Bengal, imposition of fees on outdoor patients in public hospitals, and later, the provision for communal representation in the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1923—all these could be effected because no substantial opposition of the elected members in the Indian side was there. The leaders from Maharashtra were accordingly negotiating with Das and Motilal Nehru for a joint programme. In the AICC meeting at Calcutta in November, 1922 Motilal moved a resolution urging for Council-entry, Sasanka Jivan Ray and J. M. Sengupta, two Congressmen from Bengal pointed out the merits of the new policy. If they could enter the Councils, they would oppose all the money bills and the result would be that no Ministers

would be appointed and there could be no effective Council.²⁷ In that case the Governor would have to administer with the power of military dictator and in no time the unpopular character of the government would be exposed. "It was said that standing for election would be cooperation, but they had only to see the intention behind that cooperation"—the speaker argued. "Had not the Congress given written permission to file a written statement in a case, either civil or criminal? Why did the Ali Brothers make written statements in the court? Why did Mahatma Gandhi plead guilty to the charge? Did not they cooperate voluntarily in buying postage stamps?" —They charged the No-Changers.²⁸ These arguments helped Das to formulate his Presidential speech at Gaya in December. The resolution moved by Motilal read "....the working of the Legislative Councils during their first term, has, besides proving a serious impediment to the redress of the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs and the speedy attainment of Swaraj, caused a great misery and hardship to the people;" he wanted, therefore, the Congress to resolve that "non-cooperators should contest the ensuing elections on the issue of the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs and immediate Swaraj." Jayakar in support of Motilal said that "the Government has grown more stiff, more callous, more autocratic and more indifferent to the popular will than it was before," totally belying the expectations of the non-cooperators.²⁹ "If the boycott of Councils had been complete in the sense that Indians had refused to take their seats there, there can be little doubt that the Government would have come to its senses",—such was the view presented by other Pro-changers like Hakim Ajmal Khan and V. J. Patel. "It was such a boycott that Mahatmaji hoped to bring about",—they said. "That hope was based on the wholesale abstention of voters from voting and on the sense of self-respects of the Moderates. We have

failed to bring about such a complete boycott."³⁰ According to the *Young India* of 30 November, 1922, five distinct groups supported Motilal at the Working Committee meeting. Among them Das's programme was to enter the councils with a majority and move for grant of a foundation for a true Swarajya constitution, and if it was not conceded, to follow the programme of obstruction with a view to wrecking the councils. In the meantime in June, the AICC had appointed a Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee which said in its report that the country was not prepared at that moment to embark upon a general mass civil disobedience. But the committee failed to suggest any form of action to be taken up by the congress presently as the members were divided on the question of Council-entry. One recommendation, signed by Hakim Ajamal Khan, Motilal Nehru and V. J. Patel, was that non-cooperators should contest the election on the issue of the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, and make every endeavour to be returned in a majority. Ansari, Rajagopalachari and Kasturiranga Iyengar recommended that there should be no change of the Congress programme in respect of the boycott of the Councils. The division among the leaders left the country in bewilderment, and spokesmen of both the groups exerted their energies through the press and the platform, until the final decision was taken at the Congress at Gaya.

The Pros and Cons of Council-entry :

From April onwards, when Basanti Devi had delivered her speech at the Provincial conference, Bengal remained busy in propaganda campaigns for pro and no-changers. Das's lieutenant Hemanta Sarkar wrote series of articles in *Banglar Katha*, *Basanti* and *Basumati* trying to popularise the leader's creed, the main theme of the articles being easier provision by rights as Council members to embarrass the

Government from inside the Councils than from outside. "The principal items in our Congress programme are to destroy Government Education and the Excise Departments, which are both transferred subjects. Even the Governor has no power to veto the decision of the Council on any matter relating to them. If the Council refuse to sanction any money for these departments, either the departments will have to be closed or the Reforms withdrawn, both of which are good for the country and will mean our triumph."³¹ Another form of argument presented by him was—"what is called by the congress its constructive programme may easily be achieved through the Union Boards. The bureaucracy will not be able to offer obstruction to constructive work carried through the Union Boards, which, if they are suspended by them, will go on working as non-official bodies."³² *Ananda Bazar Patrika* led the no-changer group ; it published news showing people's enthusiasm about spinning and *Khaddar* ³³ and printed Gandhi's messages daily in heavy types. Basanti Devi's Chittagong speech as well as Hemprava Mazumdar's contention that the Bardoli decision had augmented the Governmental repression received adverse comments from the editor.³⁴ Editorial comments in many other papers also expressed their failure to be convinced by Das's arguments. "The spirit and constitution of the Councils, their rules and regulations are such as to make it impossible for anyone to stand against the will of the bureaucracy"—wrote the *Dainik Basumati*.³⁵ *Ananda Bazar Patrika* maintained the same stance—"They are constituted in such a manner that it is impossible to do any work for public benefit. We can hardly understand why some respectable leaders should display such unnecessary impatience to occupy those useless places."³⁶ To add to Das's difficulties, the Muslim press also declared their opposition to Das's scheme. "The *Jamiat-al-Ulema* declared the councils as

haram If the Congress passes a resolution which would eventually conflict with the *Ulema's* declaration, Muhammadans would follow the one and ignore the other. This would set up two different lines of work, one for the Muhamedans and the other for the Hindus."³⁷ The one redeeming feature for Das was that if the Hindu nationalists of Bengal could not accept the Council-entry scheme, they had little faith on the constructive programme of the Congress. "Neither the constructive programme of Bardoli, nor the entry into Councils will by themselves help us quickly to realise the end—*Swaraj* or self-determination for the people of India"—wrote a leading paper.³⁸ The disgust of the common man is clear in Probodh Chandra Sen's article : "The truth is that the interests of the country and the interests of the leaders are not identical ..The country wanted emancipation and freedom, but what it has got is *Khaddar* and the message of non-violence, and afterwards the proposal for Council-entry. This is irony of fate, pure and simple."³⁹ A letter written by a member of the BPCC complained of a marked indifference on the part of that body in the constructive side of the non-cooperation programme.⁴⁰ Such indifference on the part of the people of Bagerhat was regretted by another Congressman.⁴¹ The Report of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee indirectly favoured Das's venture by announcing that the country was unprepared for a campaign. We must find a measure which will keep alive the energies of the people", declared Das's paper, "and see that they do not go to sleep for want of excitement... We are realising at every step that unless we can bring in a feeling of struggle against the bureaucracy, the non-cooperation movement will not live long",⁴² The BPCC met on 24 November and declared itself very strongly against Council-entry. All the office-bearers elected at the Committee were no-changers ; President Das thereupon resigned. At the

U. P. Congress Committee fourteen out of fifteen members were no changers ; so, Motilal Nehru resigned from that body. On the face of the severest criticism of his countrymen, Das prepared himself for the fight of ideologies in the coming annual session of the Congress at Gaya.

Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das had been elected President of the Ahmedabad Congress of December, 1921. But the Government did not release him from the prison to greet the nation's choice. He was re-elected as the President of the next session at Gaya. The country was eager to listen to the elaboration of the new principles he was advocating since his release. "Hitherto we have been boycotting the Councils from outside", he said in his inaugural speech, "We have succeeded in doing much, the prestige of the councils is diminished... — but these councils are still there. It should be the duty of the Congress to boycott the Councils more effectively from within." He emphatically stated that "the work of the Councils for the last two years has made it necessary for non-cooperators to enter the Councils." He was, however, conscious of the popularity of the creed of non-cooperation throughout India and so persuaded his listeners to believe that he did not mean to effect in any way a change of policy, but only of tactics. "Take the Bardoli resolution. In the matter of boycott of schools and colleges the Bardoli resolution alters the direction of our activity, which does not in any way involve the abandonment of the boycott."⁴³ So long the President of the session used to dictate from the Congress platform the programme for the year. This year there was a deviation from the usual practice. The nation listened to the President's arguments in favour of the policy he wanted the country to follow. But the prerogative in fact lay in the caucus known as the Working Committee, which had still to decide, whether the country would go for

a change, or would only carry on propaganda for Charka and Khaddar until the leaders think the time ripe for a second campaign on the same lines as of the first. On the last day of the year the Congress decided in favour of retaining the lines drawn at Nagpur—that Congressmen should not contest the elections for entering provincial and central legislatures. In the absence of Gandhi, Rajagopalachari pleaded for his Guru's principles and won.

Was it an unmistakable sign of the Congress President's defeat? At least it appeared so. In the context of Rajagopalachari's motion and the amendments thereof, all of which were lost, it was difficult to assess Das's strength in the Congress. While he had received the support of the majority of the stalwarts, how could one explain the reasons of his defeat? However, Das accepted the defeat with magnanimity. "I have dedicated the rest of my life to the attainment of *Swaraj*"—he said; so he could not retire from public life. On the other hand, "I cannot accept and cannot associate myself with most of the resolutions passed in the last session of the Congress"—he declared. So he decided to work with those who believed in his programme. On the first day of the year 1923, Das tendered his resignation of the presidentship of the Congress and announced the formation of a new party to be called the Congress-Khilafat-Swaraj Party. On his break with the non-cooperationists he said, "I must point out that every reasonable proposal for compromise was rejected, every suggestion for postponement of the discussion of the Council question was negatived, and, inspite of repeated attempts to make Civil Disobedience practicable, the majority has passed a resolution which makes it difficult if not impossible."⁴⁴ If victory or defeat is determined by the decree of the majority, Gaya certainly witnessed the defeat of its President and Das engaged all his efforts to turn this defeat into victory in the near future.

The decision at Nagpur had since been regarded as a victory of Gandhi. Richard Gordon puts it in the other way. "Nagpur witnessed Gandhi's capitulation to Das"; he asserted, because the main resolution as moved by Das was without the council-boycott clause, although it was the bone of contention between the Gandhians and non-Gandhians at Calcutta.⁴⁵ How to regard then the Gaya decision, a redemption for Gandhi by Rajagopalachari or a victory of Das? The latter at least did not give up his stand on the Council question, and when he failed to persuade the majority in the Congress to agree with him, he preferred resignation to capitulation. Viewed from another angle, Gaya registered another defeat of Gandhi. The session ended in a split among the leaders, about a hundred of whom joined Das. And Gandhi was striving so hard for unity—even at the cost of some of the principles he held so dearly. In all probabilities, Rajagopalachari could not foresee the situation as it came to pass—he did not expect Das to go so far as to tender resignation. It was not accepted; may be that "the prospect of the disintegration of the Congress had alarmed his (Das's) opponents."⁴⁶ But even after several requests and appeals Das declined to reconsider his decision.

Meanwhile pro-Council leaders including Das, Motilal Nehru, V. J. Patel, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Sherwani, Moonje, Jayakar, B. N. Sasmal etc. issued a manifesto announcing the formation of the new party. The manifesto stated that the new party would be a party within the Congress with full faith in the Congress creed as also in non-violent non-cooperation. The party was duly organised at a general meeting held at the Anand Bhawan, Allahabad, on 20-23 February, 1923. Before that Das accompanying Jayakar made propaganda tours in Madras, Bombay and Poona and from Bombay he issued a manifesto for private circulation among the party members with a draft programme for the

party.

The split in the Congress was most unfortunate—with approximately one-third of the members joining the 'rebel' group ; Rajagopalachari's obstinacy should have been atoned by wiser counsels. The no-changers had begun to doubt the reality of their victory at Gaya. Moulana Azad pleaded for a compromise and the Working Committee placed its terms before Das. At a meeting held at about the end of February the terms of compromise were settled : (1) Suspension of Council propaganda on both sides till the 30th of April ; (2) both parties to be at liberty to work out the remaining items of their programme ; and (3) after 30 April both parties to adopt such course as would be decided. The compromise resulted in a mere suspension of activities for a fixed period—it failed to offer any common ground between the contending parties. Following the agreement the pro-changers sat idly as the time of the election was approaching nearer. The compromise ceasing to have effect from 1 May, the Swarajists started campaigning vigorously for entering the Councils.

The Swarajist March :

C. R. Das's Gaya speech had raised a storm of debate in the country. Although Das was the acclaimed leader of Bengal, there was considerable opposition to his new party. In general the entire nationalist press was against him, and as noted above, the BPCC was dominated by the no-changers. One of the papers commented that the party of violence, the Communists and all the discontented elements would assemble under Deshabandhu's 'rebel' group. Further, it apprehended, that the country would again go the way of violence.⁴⁷ The editor, of course, forgot, that it was the achievement of Deshbandhu to unite all such elements under the roof of the Congress, and it was at his behest that

the revolutionaries had suspended their acts of violence. Das had before him the Herculean task of convincing the critics in favour of Council-entry, and securing the majority support both in the provincial and the All India Congress Committees. Returning from Gaya he made whirlwind tours throughout the province and in the teeth of threats by revolutionaries to take his life,⁴⁸ he held meetings in villages, towns and cities for consolidating his newly formed party. Laurels to his diction and power of persuasion, by the middle of January the opinion of Bengal was turning round in favour of the policy advocated by Das.⁴⁹ "Das's party, which includes a number of influential men, is gaining adherents daily"—so goes the Bengal government's fortnightly report for early February, "and the subscription raised by the party for electioneering purposes are likely to interfere seriously with the collections made by Congress supporters for the Tilak Swarajya Fund."⁵⁰ The Congress suffered not only financially but in recruitment of volunteers as well. Not unnecessarily, therefore, one of the Congress organs urged the Swarajists to explain to the subscribers the purpose for which they were raising money as there was ample scope for confusion between Congress and Swarajist funds.⁵¹ Early in May Das wrote to Motilal in a complacent manner, "I have hardly any doubt that Bengal is ours".⁵² About the middle of the month he had a trial of strength with the no-changer leader Shyam Sundar Chakravarti at the provincial conference at Barisal. Das's resolution for removing the Congress ban on Council-entry was ruled out of order by President Chakravarti, and Das with his followers, left the meeting. Within a fortnight, however, the government reported of a steady growth of public opinion in Das's favour.⁵³ In the practical field the change of opinion was evidenced when in a by-election for the Legislative Council a no-vote campaign was undertaken alright by the Congress

but its activities remained limited to the distribution of leaflets and showing of placards. There was no picketting at the polling booths. "It may be anticipated that Das's campaign will be more vigorous and better organised," commented the Government report. "Shyam Sundar Chakravarti still declared it to be the duty of the Congress to dissuade electors from voting though whether his active opposition will persist until the time for elections, is doubtful,"—noted the same report.⁵⁴ A *Rayats'* Conference at Bogra passed a resolution accepting voting at the next election against the stout opposition of the Secretary of the local Khilafat Committee.⁵⁵ The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* after a period of hesitation decided that Das's party was in the ascendant and wrote in his favour.⁵⁶ When in July, Anil Baran Roy, a prominent no-changer member of the BPCC, wanted to carry on agitation against Union Boards, even the editor of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, a leading organ of the anti-Das group, expressed suspicion about the success of such a step with the *Deshbandhu* against it.⁵⁷ This indicated Das's growing hold over Bengal politics. Although the Tripura and Rangpur District Committees voted for Council-boycott, the government noted with uneasiness Das's rising power in the BPCC. In June, the Committee attended by 225 members approved of the Congress compromise resulting in the President Shyam Sundar Chakravarti's resignation. During Das's term in the prison, the provincial committee had gone under the no-changer faction. After about a year and a half the Das's group regained their hold over it.

The Gaya debate cast its influence over all Congressmen and the AICC became divided in its opinion on the Council issue. Meetings of the AICC and the Congress Working Committee were held at Bombay towards the end of May. The Swarajists were in the minority on the Wor-

king Committee, but they secured a majority in the AICC. Several no-changers, including Ansari, Sarojini Naidu and Azad put forward and eventually passed a compromise resolution which the government was apt to remark as a victory of Das.⁵⁸ This change of horses in midstream infuriated Rajagopalachari so much so that he with his supporters resigned from the Working Committee. Das immediately utilised the situation by making it a packed body of his own supporters.

In the AICC meeting Jawaharlal Nehru and Purushottamdas Tandon sponsored a resolution which disapproved propaganda against Council-entry. In short, the leaders could not make up yet their mind and vacillated between 'Yes' and 'No' for Council-entry. The Working Committee commented on the Nehru-Tandon resolution in the following manner—"The mandate of the Congress maintaining boycott remains untouched. What the resolution does is merely to ask Congressmen not to carry on propaganda in furtherance of the boycott." Das had by now been convinced that any move for a compromise was foredoomed because of Rajagopalachari's opposition. He strongly opposed Jawaharlal's motion in the Working Committee meeting in July to decide the issue in a special session of the Congress. "Why not settle them as businessmen at this very minute"—Das said. But the motion was carried and the special Congress was thrust, as Jayakar said, upon the Swarajists.⁵⁹ Das then issued a manifesto clarifying his position. "The Bureaucracy must be crushed and the rights of the Indian nation secured. The task of the Congress for the next 2 or 3 years is the creation of that sanction by the people which no Bureaucracy can disobey. Council, National Education---what are these but the preparation for our battle ground? Is it too much to ask the members of the Congress to entertain a little toleration—for the views of those to whom they are opposed?

We must present to the Bureaucracy one whole united India—let Congressmen unite.”⁶⁰ Maulana Azad had been convinced by Deshabandhu’s arguments, but still he did not leave the Gandhi camp. He did not like the division. As in February, so in September, being the President of the special Congress session at Delhi, he pleaded for compromise. On the latter occasion he went further to advocate the Swarajist plan and urged the Congress to take up the Swarajist policy of contesting the elections and carrying the fight on from within the legislatures. “We could not change the creed or renounce the principle” he said, “but we could change our tactics any moment at will. If we refused to introduce such changes, it meant that we refused to fight.” His warnings to the fighting factions revealed his political wisdom—“I regret to say that the party opposed to all changes must beware lest we shall inadvertently be betrayed into blind obedience or total inertia, and the parties insisting on the introduction of changes have failed to realise that we must not ruin the discipline of our organisation for the sake of a minor difference.”⁶¹ The Swaraj Party Election Manifesto repeated the same plea: “The Congress creed is nothing more than the attainment of Swaraj by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means, and has no reference whatsoever to non-cooperation which the Congress has adopted by resolutions passed at its periodical sessions, such resolutions being no part of the creed.”⁶²

All these moves culminated in the Congress resolution at its annual session at Coconada in December, 1923; “Adhering to the principle of non-violent non-cooperation, this Congress declares that such Congressmen as have no religious or other conscientious objections against entering legislature, are at liberty to stand as candidates and to exercise their right of voting at the forthcoming elections and this Congress, therefore, suspends all propaganda against

entering Council.”⁶³ Thus, within a span of only three years the much-talked of Nagpur resolution was rescinded in favour of the view upheld by Bengal Congressmen in 1920. Das’s victory was complete at Coconada, when the Congress, although with a little reluctance permitted Congressmen to utilise their franchise, even to enter the legislatures.

The plan, programme and the constitution of the Swaraj party were drawn up at its first Conference at Allahabad. The attainment of Dominion status for India was declared to be the immediate goal of the Party ; the immediate programme included setting up of nationalist candidates throughout the country to contest and secure seats in the Legislative Councils and the Assembly at the next general election. In a speech delivered at Madras on 30 May, Das outlined his policy as : “I am going to take the people into the path of resistanceI want you to enter the Councils and secure the majority of seats and to put forward the national demand. What I do want is to fight the bureaucracy from all directions, from inside the Councils, trying to make Government impossible, and from outside the Councils by working the Non-Cooperation programme more enthusiastically than now. The day will come when the outside and inside activities put together will be too much even for this bureaucracy.”⁶⁴ In the Party’s election manifesto Motilal Nehru described the aims and objectives : “The ultimate goal of the party is described as Swarajya, but as a preliminary to its attainment the Party will claim immediate effective control of the existing machinery and system of Government. The Party will not concur itself with trivial reforms in the various departments of the administration to be obtained by the grace of the Government, but will insist on a transfer of the power to effect the necessary reforms from the bureaucracy to the people themselves.”⁶⁵ So, the

Congress returned to the old Moderate policy of getting a transfer of power, instead of winning freedom through a revolutionary move. Gandhi's ideal of severing all connections with the 'Satanic' government was sacrificed at the altar of power politics. Indeed, this reorientation in Congress politics was an achievement of Das and Motilal Nehru.

The Swaraj party declared that its candidates were to contest the election with a vow to adopt a policy of uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction within the councils, if the Government failed to accede to their legitimate demands within a reasonable time ; and that, in no case would any member of the party accept office. After the Delhi Congress, the Swarajists had hardly two months time to get prepared for the forthcoming elections in November. Nevertheless, the victory of the party was overwhelming. The Moderates were routed—veteran leaders like Sir Surendranath, S. R. Das, the Advocate General and Sir Nilratan Sarkar—were defeated by Dr. B. C. Roy, Satkaripati Ray and Bijoy Krishna Bose who were but newcomers in politics. Broomfield has sought to explain the victory on various grounds—that Das himself, Bidhan Roy and Subhas Bose had previous experiences of election campaigns in England ; that Das was fortunate in having young enthusiasts in their thirties and forties as his party cadre ; and that he had sent a two-pronged feeler in the old and new consciousness. He had succeeded in securing the support of both the groups—the intellectuals, who did not forsake the hope of sharing administration, and the masses who had begun to look upon the congress as their own. His party "had taken the old *bhadralok* Congress and refashioned it to meet the demands of mass politics."⁶⁶ Standing on the platform of mass contact Das had unfurled the flag of neo-constitutionalism. The Swarajists took full advantage of the district and village organisations of the Congress. Clad in Khadi, they were

Gandhi's men to the native villagers. The most important fact of all, not taken note of by Broomfield is that Das had as party volunteers the very same youths who had made non-cooperation a success in Bengal. Before the re-organisation of the Congress in 1921 the only organised parties were the revolutionary parties who followed their leaders with unquestioning obedience. Besides, they had conquered the fear of the bureaucratic repression, even upto their gallows. This fearlessness made them up for the brilliant and unwavering Satyagrahis. From 1921 the *Yugantar* group of revolutionaries had been helping Das. Members of the other important organisation, the *Anusilan* group did not at first join non-cooperation. But the campaign of 1921 had opened their eyes, and in 1923 they joined the Swaraj Party to utilise the mass campaign, just as their opponents did in 1921 for reconsolidating the party since destroyed by Police actions during the War. The joining of the *Anusilan* revolutionaries reinforced Das's party considerably. It became then easy for Das's group to capture the provincial committee and "the few genuine Gandhians like Shyam Sundar Chakravarti were isolated, and no solid Gandhian party with power and influence in Bengal politics could take shape among the Bengali intelligentsia." "The Bengal Congress was so completely dominated by Das's party", noted Rajak K. Roy, "that neither the young Marwari radicals under Padam Raj Jain nor the Muslim Khilafat workers under Abul Kalam Azad had any say in its affairs."⁶⁷ So in spite of and against Gandhi's earned dictatorship, Bengal assembled beneath the standard of revolt upheld by Das. Moderates like Banerjee and Ambica Charan Mazumdar and Extremists like Pal had already voiced their indignation at the vesting of sole powers to Gandhi. It was this monolithic edifice of Gandhi, which received now the first hammer blow. Gandhi, coming out of jail, studied the situation and

lest it went out of his hands, gave his sanction to the Swarajist programme.


Implementation of Swarajist programme :

The Swaraj Party represented the upper middle class intellectuals, who had been opposed to mass involvement in politics. One section of them severed connection with the Congress and decided to share the responsibilities of administration under the Government of India Act 1919. Another section joined the non-cooperation movement, but, as suggested by modern scholars, that was more with the intent of exercising checks over Gandhi, than for any fascination for the programme of non-cooperation.⁶⁸ The stalwarts of the Swaraj Party, Das, Motilal, Kelkar, Khaparde, V. J. Patel, S. Srinivasa Iyengar, Jamnadas M. Mehta—all of them were learned law-practitioners. Other leaders of the party included the “Big Five” in Bengal—Tulsi C. Goswami, a rich zamindar with interests in jute business ; Sarat C. Bose, a successful barrister ; Nirmal C. Chunder, a wealthy solicitor with a leading place in the Kayastha society in Calcutta ; Dr. Bidhan C. Roy, a renowned physician with industrial connection ; and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, pioneer in insurance enterprise.⁶⁹ Rich landlords like Devendralal Khan of Narajole, Kumar Sarkar Roy of Bhagyakul, Taraknath Mukherjee and Loknath Mukherjee of Uttarpara, Dhirendra Narayan Roy of Lalgola and Roy Harendra Nath Chawdhuri of Taki enlisted their names in the Swaraj Party. The bulk of the rank and file was supplied by the revolutionary parties. Whether or not the Congress decided to agree with them, the Swarajists were resolute in their decision of fighting the elections. In the United Provinces Municipal elections in March-April the Swarajist succeeded in gaining the majority in many places. The election campaigns were educative while the success added to their strength of mind.

In November Council-election results recognised the Swarajists as a potent force. With their allies they were returned in a majority in the Legislative Assembly and the Bengal Legislative Council, while the party alone had an absolute majority in the Council of the Central Provinces. In the Bombay, U. P. and Assam Councils, they gained sufficient seats to establish themselves as a party to be reckoned with.⁷⁰ Local governments could not but appreciate the vigour and efficiency of both the leaders and the ranks of the Swaraj Party and attributed their victory to their organisational capabilities.⁷¹ The I. B. also recognised Das's astute pragmatism as a key to his party's success at the polls. On 30 September in a speech at Calcutta, Das "revised the programme he had enunciated on the 30th of May and stated that impossible demands should not be made in the Councils, nor should Government resolutions for the public good be opposed. "The object of this utterance was undoubtedly to gain the support of the waverers with moderate inclinations, in the approaching elections"—noted the I. B.⁷² Whatever the exact reasons,—Das's success at winning over the revolutionaries by making the repeal of all repressive laws one of the main planks of his political platform,⁷³ or his buying Muslim support by promise of concessions to the community,⁷⁴ Swaraj Party's success was spectacular in both the Council and the Municipal elections. Fifty seven Hindu and Muslim candidates stood on Swarajist tickets, of whom forty were returned. "Bengal has declared itself Swarajist", commented *The Statesman*. "In every kind of Bengali constituencies the Swarajists have triumphed. Even the Muhammadan electorate which was considered to be a safe asset for the Government, has been rent asunder."⁷⁵ Das's dreams were coming to be true. If the Independents and some of the non-Swarajist Muslim members could be won over, there was every possibility of voting down all

motions from the Treasury Benches and thus wrecking the constitution of 1919. After the elections members of the Bengal Swaraj Party met at Calcutta on 16 December and decided unanimously not to accept ministerial office until the minimum demands of the party had been granted. These demands were—immediate release of political prisoners, repeal or withdrawal of all repressive laws and complete provincial autonomy. The All India leaders of the party met at Lucknow early in January, 1924, confirmed the demands as placed by the Bengal branch and added an extra demand of summoning a Round Table Conference of selected members of the Assembly, the Swaraj Party and the Government to determine the principles of a constitution for India.

As a matter of procedure Governor Lytton offered Das, who led the largest single party in the Bengal Council, to form the Ministry. But his party was pledged to non-acceptance of office, so Das informed the Governor : “The members of the party are pledged to do everything in their power by using the legal right granted under the Reforms Act to put an end to the system of Dyarchy. This duty they cannot discharge if they take office Under the circumstances, I regret, I cannot undertake responsibility regarding the Transferred Departments.”⁷⁶ Das could not take the responsibility, he would not permit anybody to take that responsibility either. That was the vow of the Swarajists taken before entering the Councils. The Governor tried to form the Ministry with willing persons like Surendranath Mallick⁷⁷ and then with Fazlul Huq, but the Swarajists, with the assistance of the Nationalist Muslims had a clear majority to thwart every attempt of Lytton and his ministers to carry on business. In the Central Provinces, the Swaraj Party majority soon brought the Council to a standstill by passing a vote of no confidence in the Ministers, after which



the Council was adjourned *sine die*. In the Bengal Council the party did not have the absolute majority, so its leader was out in search of allies. Early in December, 1923 Das came to an understanding with Muslim leaders of the provinces which came to be known as the Bengal (Hindu-Muslim) Pact. Negotiations for the Pact were started in September but the terms were not finalised before the elections. The terms of the Pact were published on 18 December over the signature of the BPCC Secretary, Subhas Bose. The Pact granted the Muslims rights of representation in the Legislature in proportion to population and through separate electorates. In local bodies 60 per cent seats and in government services 55 per cent posts were to be reserved for them, and until that percentage was reached, they might supply upto 80 per cent of all recruits. It also banned Hindu processional music before mosques and provided for the freedom of Muslims in cow-slaughter. When the negotiations were going on, many Muslims were selected to contest as Swarajist candidates. After the conclusion of the Pact 21 Muslim members of the Council joined Das in his trial of strength with the bureaucracy. Some members of the party known as Independent Nationalists led by Byomkesh Chakravarti, differed with Das on the Hindu-Muslim Pact, but sided with the Swaraj Party on other vital issues in the Council. Chakravarti's failure to secure any ally other than the Moderates barred his way of becoming Minister. Besides, he wanted that all the three Ministers should be chosen from his party, a demand which Lytton could not fulfil.⁷⁸ Frustrated in his attempt at becoming a Minister, Chakravarti now joined the opposition. Das was thus able to secure an absolute majority, and with confidence he started such actions for which Lytton liked to describe him as a 'vanguard of destruction'.⁷⁹ During the Budget Session there was a major trial of strength between the Government and

the Opposition in which the latter come out victorious because of their numerical superiority. Important items of the Budget had to be dropped, the Council could not sanction grants to pay the salaries of Inspectors in the Education Department and Medical Department establishment. And the Council was going to be wrecked as it could not sanction the salaries of the Ministers. The demand for Minister's salaries was rejected twice—once in March and again in August. Swaraj Party's motion of no confidence in Ministers was defeated by the margin of one vote only. The rejection of the budget was acclaimed in the nationalist press as a great national triumph. "It is a day of glory for the Bengalis", wrote one paper, "in as much as they have been able to end dyarchy." "The belief that the Dyarchy is absolutely worthless is firmly impressed in the minds of the people", wrote another daily, "Everybody must admit that the Swarajists have done this good to the country."⁸⁰ One of Das's principal aims—to maintain an anti-bureaucracy feeling was thus achieved. Another important item in his programme—to wreck the Reformed Council—had also met with success. The Governor was compelled to divide between himself and the Member of the Executive Council the administration of the Transferred Departments. The Dyarchy was of no avail.

Das's success in embarrassing Lytton was commended by his countrymen. The Governor, on his part, was losing temper. The defeats in the Council he took as personal insult. "I think", wrote an excited Lytton, "he (Das) is extremely unscrupulous and devoid of any constructive political ideas."⁸¹ The Governor openly involved himself in the business of the Council, even met in a tea-party with the non-Swarajist M.L.C.s to persuade them to vote with the Ministers.⁸² His unconstitutional ways to wreck vengeance on Das's party created a feeling of uneasiness in

the minds of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State. Reading repeatedly advised him to move cautiously lest his unpopularity grew in volume, and that Das would be sure to capitalise on that.³

In a speech delivered at the Council Das gave a suitable reply to Lytton's charge, "It has been said that our cry is Destroy. Destroy we want to destroy it, and get rid of a system which does no good and can do no good. We want to destroy it, because we want to construct a system which can be worked with success and will enable us to do good to the masses." The Swarajists had innured the system they wanted to get rid of. Failing to appoint Ministers Lytton had no choice but to suspend the constitution. But was that the ultimate aim which prompted Das to be at war with the bureaucracy? Probably not, his ambition was pitched higher than that. "He believed," suggests Broomfield, "that if he could bring the working of reforms to a standstill the British would be forced to come to him, cap in hand, with an offer of constitutional concessions. He would then be in a position to dictate his own terms."⁴ But the government could not be brought to its knees yet. Reserved departments were not transferred in the hands of the Indians and the Imperialist Government needed to care little for erosion of popularity. It remained as autocratic and repressive as before. This part of Das's ambition therefore remained unfulfilled, and members of his party were at pains to convince the people that the fight in the Council was only a part of their strategy. "Their (the Swarajists') achievements in the Assembly in the Central Provinces and Bengal had shown that the Councils were the only places where non-coöperation could be carried on fully and effectively"—wrote V. J. Patel. "We have never claimed that we can win Swaraj through the councils but that only we can prevent the mischief that would have been otherwise

done to the interests of India by their abstention.”⁸⁵

The successes they achieved in preventing mischief was not upto their expectation. They found no constitutional handle with which to prevent the hanging danger of the Bengal Ordinance on the revolutionaries to whom the Swarajists owed much for their success in the polls. Even since the joining of the revolutionaries in the Congress in 1921, the Government of Bengal was obsessed with the fear of a revival of violence in the province. The capture of the BPCC by Das made the Government still more uneasy because of Das's close connections with the revolutionaries. When the non-cooperation movement under Gandhi's lead came to an end, the Government apprehended a resurgence of revolutionary activities under cover of the Swaraj Party. A few acts of robbery and murder, believed to be initiated by the *Yugantar* revolutionaries, prompted the Government to arrest a number of suspects, including Subhas Bose, under Regulation III of 1818. The murder of a European named Mr. Day in January, 1924, by a revolutionary party member and the growth in number of daring acts was promptly followed by the promulgation of an Ordinance empowering the Government to make indiscriminate arrests. Needless to say, the Government cast the net over the Swaraj Party Cadre and created a very embarrassing situation for the party leader. In January, 1925, there was again a trial of strength between the Swaraj Party and the Government when the latter wanted to replace the ordinance by passing a Bill in a special session of the Legislature. The Council refused leave to introduce the Bill, but yet could not prevent the danger, because the Governor certified it for a period of further five years. The Swarajist MLCs passed resolutions in the council demanding release of prisoners detained under Regulation III and the Government were threatened with a revival of civil disobedience if they failed to carry

out the resolutions.⁸⁶ All these were of no avail and the Swarajists remained content with the claim of success in effecting Gandhi's release only. When Constitutional methods failed to save his volunteers from bureaucratic wrath, Das waved the Olive branch in the hope of getting the release of the Ordinance prisoners. He made it known to the Governor that he and Motilal Nehru "would be willing to withdraw Swarajist opposition as a matter of principle in the Council," if the Government agreed to "recommend the transfer of more subjects (though no particular subjects were specified) : and to release some less important members arrested under the ordinance, on security."⁸⁷ Lytton seemed to be relieved of the tension created by Das's opposition, wrote, "They (Das and Motilal) would also be willing to withdraw their opposition to the appointment of Ministers and might even be willing to accept office themselves."⁸⁸

The activities of the Swaraj Party successfully sustained the nation's anti-bureaucratic feeling which the non-cooperation movement had engendered. Shortly after their victory in the Council election in March, the Swarajists achieved a sweeping victory in the municipal election. Out of the seventy five elected members of the Calcutta Corporation fifty-five were Swarajists. In the management of the Corporation they left marks of their constructive ability. C.R. Das was elected the first Mayor of Calcutta, Saheed Suhrawardy the Deputy Mayor and Subhas Bose the Chief Executive Officer (C.E.O). The Corporation under the Swarajists had acquired a look with all characteristics of a nationalist institution. While the Councillors, Aldermen and the officers attended office in white khadi garments, their main task included establishment of free primary schools, charitable dispensaries and centres for free distribution of milk to poor children. A health department was

set up to carry on health propaganda. In running election campaigns the Swarajists had to divert their attention from the constructive programme in the non-cooperation resolution. After the capture of the Calcutta Corporation they revived the necessary attention towards nation-building. "People for the first time began to look upon the Municipality as their own institution and municipal officers and employees as public servants not bureaucrats"—noted the C.E.O. with satisfaction.⁸⁹ Besides they did in the Corporation what they failed to do in the legislature, namely, extending help to the freedom fighters. In January 1925, the Corporation announced offer of relief to the detenus and their dependants and all who were suffering for the country's cause. One of the first acts (of the Swarajists in the Calcutta Corporation) was to call for applications for assistance from those who had worked and suffered in the country's cause,"⁹⁰—pointed out the Bengal Government. The government held for certain that the revolutionary movement in Bengal was revitalised by the monetary help they received from the Swarajists in the Calcutta Corporation, an institution yielding a revenue of 2 crores of rupees annually. But the *Yugantar* revolutionaries deny any such payment by Das. "Das had intimate connections with *Yugantar* workers, and that was only for the Congress work and for implementing the Congress programme", writes a *Yugantar* member. "It received no money from Das for that work (violent revolutionary work). I can say, rather in 1930, Sarat Bose and Bidhan Roy gave small amounts for secret violent activities. Even Pandit Motilal then gave Rs. 1000/—for disrupting the communication and transport arrangements of the Government."⁹¹

Besides helping the revolutionaries, the Government charged the Swarajists with misappropriation of both money and power of the Corporation. It was alleged that they were

collecting huge amount of money for the party fund by extending patronage to businessmen, contractors and shopkeepers."² It is evident that the party was badly in need of money. "The difficulty is about money", Das informed Motilal when the party was on the making. "Can't you let us have, say 5,000/--from the central organisation so that we can begin the thing properly?"³ Government reports showed that until 30 April, 1923 the Swarajists could collect only two lakhs in contrast with the no-changers' collection of 15 lakhs of rupees."⁴ Evidently the resources of the barristers and the landlords were much too short of those of the capitalists. Under such conditions it appears quite natural to think that the party got, directly or indirectly some money from the Corporation. The Government report seems correct to this extent. But there is no evidence that the money went straight to the revolutionaries for revitalising their organisations and activities.

Other Spheres of Swarajist Action.

The promoters of the Swaraj Party declared the party to be an integral part of the Congress. Simultaneously with the works of electioneering, the Swaraj Party carried on campaigns on the peasants' and workers' fronts. The party members sustained the anti-bureaucratic spirit among the villagers by constantly carrying on jute boycott and temperance campaigns. About the middle of 1923 an incident at a village in the Faridpur district involved the Swarajists in a direct fight with the bureaucracy. Police atrocity in the village of Char Maniar during investigation of a case of dacoity was condemned in several meetings held in near-by areas. At the instance of Dr. Protap Chandra Guha Roy, the Faridpur DCC appointed a Committee of enquiry. The BPCC also sent a probe committee, but the reports of both were alleged by the government to be false.

Eventually, the matter was taken to the Legislature. Dr.P. N.Banerjee, an eminent Congress M.L.C. said that the people had lost all confidence in goveanment officers. Hussein Suhrawardy requested the government not to extend official protection to the police if they were guilty. All Swarajist members of the House severely criticised the government for its handling of the Char Maniar affair. Like the Chandpur Coolie affair, this trouble between the peasants of Char Maniar and police party turned into one between the Swarajists and the government. Under severe strain of Swarajist opposition the government made counter-attack by instituting a defamation case against the foremost leader of the agitation, Dr.P.C.Guha Ray. The case protracted for two years costing the government several thousands of rupees, after which it was withdrawn and the affair came to an end. The Swarajists strengthened their position as champions of oppressed nationalism, their prestige further enhanced by the public apology made by the Governor for his indescnt comment against Indian ladies.^{9 5}

Neither Gandhi nor any of the eminent Congress leaders did recognise labour movement from the angle of class-struggle. Different leaders held personal ideas about the organisation of labour ; the majority excepting Gandhi, of course, seemed to have considered the organisation of masses necessary for furthering the national struggle. Past experiences in involving the general masses in the non-cooperation movement was good enough to create a legacy for the Swarajists to monitor labour-movements. The BPCC under Swaraj Party leadership did thus intervene in every labour-employer dispute and seize the leadership of the former in the province.^{9 6} Das did not share Gandi's dislike of trade-unionism. "There is an apprehension in the minds of some non-cooperators that the cause of non-cooperation will suffer if we exploit labour for Congress purposes. I

confess that I do not understand the argument"—he said as President of the Congress at Gaya. "My experience has convinced me that Labour and Peasantry of India to-day are, if anything, more eager to attain Swaraj than the so-called middle and the educated classes." If there is exaggeration in this part of the speech there is much reason in its continuation: "If we are 'exploiting' the boys of tender years and students of college, if we are 'exploiting' the whole of the middle classes irrespective of their creed and caste and occupation, may I ask what justification is there for leaving out the Labourers and Peasants?" Moreover, Das had the foresight to predict the intrusion of the Communists as a result of Congress failure to take care of the masses. "If the Congress fails to do its duty" he said, "you may expect to find organisations set up in the country by Labourers and Peasants detached from you, disassociated from the cause of Swaraj, which will eventually bring within the arena of peaceful revolution class struggles and the war of special interests."⁷ For two consecutive years in 1923 and 1924 Das was honoured as President of the A.I.T.U.C. In the third annual session of this Congress at Lahore in March, 1923, he deplored Congress failure to operate in the labour field; "It was my misfortune to force the labour resolution at the Nagpur Congress on unwilling delegates, and I find that it has not been acted upon to this day."⁸ At Gaya he "forced" another such resolution over the same "unwilling delegates", and that too did not meet with any different luck. Gandhi was in prison, and he did not like to comment about which he possessed no first-hand knowledge. Nevertheless, his views on labour organisation were not unknown. "It is dangerous to make political use of factory labourers or the peasantry—not that we are not entitled to do so, but we are not ready for it", he wrote in 1291."⁹ His idea was to set up the Ahmedabad Labour

Union which was of his own creation, as a model. He recognised no other union and abhorred Congress collaboration with them.¹⁰⁰ However, Das's interests in labour work inspired many of his followers there. His organ *Banglar Katha* published articles upholding the necessity of organising the working classes "If we want to remove the political dependence of the country, the social and financial dependence of the so-called lower class people will have to be done away with."¹⁰¹ How far his ideal was guided by the urge for preservation of the bourgeois interest in keeping the labour well under control, is a matter open to conjecture, what was certain, was that, he made possible a Congress-labour collaboration, at least in the limits of his own province. "It is significant", noted the Bengal government, "that several Bengalees have been placed on the committee appointed by the Congress to assist the AITUC in organising labourers, both industrial and agricultural."¹⁰² Bose, who had by that time earned the name of labour leader, was continuously kept in prison by the government on one plea or other. Certainly the government was feeling uneasy at the growing hold of Bengal congressmen over labour. The leader's sympathy with the masses left a permanent impress when a Swarajist-majority in the Indian Legislative Assembly passed the Workmen's Compensation Act in 1924, some kind of insurance for the risks of labourers. As noted above, Das's views on this particular point did not tally with many in Congress leadership, including Gandhi. Although, somewhat tainted by the Council-question, the difference of Das and Gandhi on the labour question lingered till the cruel hands of death removed the opposition to Gandhi. As foreseen by Das, the Communists were soon to have a sound footing among the labouring classes, and to create a far more bitter opposition to Gandhi leading to the ruination of the image of the Mahatma.

Though busy in exhaustive political campaigning, Das and his followers did not fail to give the necessary importance to social and humanitarian works as parts of national organisational programme. In Bogra, Malda and Nadia districts they encouraged and guided tenants to resist the oppression of the landlords.¹⁰³ They organised flood-relief camps in September, 1922, when an unprecedented flood overwhelmed North Bengal. During the concluding months of 1922, a controversy between the Governor and Education Minister of Bengal on one side and the Vice-Chancellor and the Senate of the Calcutta University Bill, appeared to Das as a brilliant opportunity for fulfilling his year-old dream of nationalising the University. The entire correspondence between the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor was published in the press, which showed Sir Asutosh's determination to fight back bureaucratic control and retain the autonomy of the University, even if he had to resign his post as Vice-Chancellor. Das readily came to join Sir Asutosh to formulate "a joint measure of opposition to paralyse all sinister attempts to rob the University of Calcutta of its accademic freedom."¹⁰⁴ Although the nationalist press in Bengal did not speak favourably for the Vice-Chancellor, rather hinted at his failure to join the nationalists in 1921, and commented on his plea of freedom as a camouflage,¹⁰⁵ Das had seen in it a chance to expose the government.

Early in 1924, Swarajists in Bengal engaged themselves in fighting a social evil. The corrupt immoral practices of the Mohanta of Tarakeshwar, a renowned pilgrimage of the Hindus, situated a few miles away from Calcutta, led an organisation of saints under Swamis Viswananda and Satchidananda to launch a satyagraha campaign there. The leaders had formally sought the permission of the BPCC to launch the campaign. The BPCC, led by its President and Secretary Das and Bose, made an on-the-spot

enquiry and along with the necessary permission gave the tacit promise of help also.

Frequent skirmishes between the volunteers and the Mohanta's agents led to police intervention there. Needless to say, the government sided with the Mohanta on the plea of maintaining law and order. Without any dallying, the BPCC Council openly took charge of the campaign. The government, failing to bring the parties to a compromise stopped all communications to and from Tarakeswar wherefore the Satyagrahis retaliated by setting up barricades over the railway track. After a prolonged campaign Das was able to come to an understanding with the Mohanta by which the corrupt priest abdicated and the property of the temple was entrusted to a body of trustees. The enforced settlement was enough to bring victory to the satyagrahis.¹⁰⁶ At Gaya Das claimed that his new programme did not at all mean the discontinuation of non-cooperation, contrarily it meant the spread of the doctrine in a new sphere, i. e. the Councils. He had kept his word, Till its leader's death in June, 1925, the Swaraj Party kept on moving the wheel of revolution over India's socio-political structure, taking up at the sametime a zealous stand against the bureaucracy which they said, was responsible for all the evils of the Indian society. The government noticed with concern the Swarajists forward march in Bengal and with frequent insinuations about the Swarajist - revolutionary entente, cracked down upon them by clamping the Bengal Ordinance in October, 1924. With indecent alacrity the government removed to the jails all the lieutenants of Das—Surendra Mohan Ghosh, Satyendra Chandra Mitra, Anil Baran Ray,¹⁰⁷ including the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation, Subhas Bose.¹⁰⁸ Gandhi, coming out of his imprisonment early in 1924, felt gravely concerned about the situation in Bengal, because Congress in Bengal could

hardly be differentiated from the Swaraj Party in the province. He was verily in an imbroglio to or not to come to terms with the Swarajists. While it was almost impossible to steer the Congress ship without the help of Das and Motilal, the acceptance of the Swarajist programme also would be an unconditional surrender, along with the tacit approval of violence. Throughout 1924 Gandhi remained a prisoner of indecision.

Gandhi and the Swarajists.

At last the congress at Coconada at the end of the year 1923, under the presidentship of Maulana Mohamed Ali approved the Swarajist programme. During Gandhi's absence Pattabhi, Ballabhbai and Rajagopalachari were keeping the conscientious in Gandhi's favour. They had successfully managed to oppose a resolution at Coconada for changing the Congress creed to complete independence, as they had done to the Council-entry resolution at Gaya. Alarmed by the growing popularity of Das's programme, they made a frontal attack upon him by raising the clamour that Das's Bengal Pact was anti-national. The details of the Pact will be discussed later along with Hindu-Muslim relations. Suffice it to say here that Das had done nothing more than following the footsteps of Gandhi in coming to an understanding with the Muslims, favouring them with a few facilities in the Swarajist-owned institutions and promising such favours in other fields when Swaraj came replacing British Raj. The draft of the Pact was placed before the AICC for consideration, but the committee refused to ratify it as the general belief was that in it too many concessions had been made to the Muslims. Das tried to justify himself by saying that these concessions were necessary under the peculiar circumstances of Bengal. Some of the AICC members would not even allow Das's

Pact to be incorporated in the resolution on the National Pact signed by Ansari and Lajpat Rai. Das was very much offended, and said that the Pact had been sent up by the BPCC as a proposal and that Bengal had a right to be heard. "You might delete the Bengal National Pact from the resolution, but you could not delete Bengal from the history of the Indian National Congress" said Das confidently, "Bengal is where she stands".¹⁰⁰ The non-acceptance of the Pact by the Congress left Das to plough his lonely furrow.¹¹⁰ His overtures befriended the Muslims of the province, who rendered valuable help in turning the 'minority in the Congress into a majority' in Das's favour, as also in his crusade against Dyarchy. The Muslims had changed their former opinion about Council-entry. "Everyone must agree", wrote an influential Muslim journal, "that if a number of patriotic, independent minded people can get elected to the Council instead of incompetent, useless yesmen and lackeys, then at least the country will not be harmed to the extent to which it was in the past."¹¹¹ Das was not going to spoil this atmosphere of cordiality by strict reverence to party discipline. The rift which had already emerged around the question of Council-entry, between the Das group in Bengal and the all-India Congress leadership headed by Rajagopalachari, widened through the tussle about the Bengal Pact. No wonder that some of the nationalist papers in Bengal should find fault in the AICC decision. "For eight centuries we have argued and quarrelled with the Muslims and thereby gained nothing", commented one of the Hindu journals. "If we can get today their assistance by placing confidence in them and giving them some privileges, should we not do it?"¹¹² "We have failed to discover what injustice there is in the Hindu-Muslim Pact", wrote another. "The important point about it is that the arrangement would be put

into force when we have achieved Swaraj. . . It is surprising that we are not ashamed to quarrel about a thing which depends on the far off future.”¹¹³ Even though Das failed to persuade the Congress, he himself maintained the Muslim alliance with unerring faith and skill.

Das had proved himself to be uncompromising. He aspired to control the Congress machinery, but not at the cost of his principles. He would try to persuade and convince his antagonists, but himself would not succumb to them. His firm conviction brought him defeat, as at Calcutta, even rid him of the highest national honour, as at Gaya. Those however, who cared much for the unity of the Congress, had to sacrifice their creed for coming to an understanding with Das. The Congress was thus passing then through a leadership crisis, with Gandhi behind the bars, and the majority of the veterans out forming a parallel organisation. The Congress held its annual session at Coconada in december, 1923, in this situation, with a gloom cast over its present and future. Probably this realisation and the persuasion of the President Maulana Mohamed Ali¹¹⁴ combined to lead the no-changers to accept a compromise with the pro-changers. The release of Gandhi in early 1924 raised the morale of his followers, but what would Gandhi do? Should he encourage the determined opposition of the no-changers, or preserve the unity of the Congress through compromise? He was perceptibly undecided and skilfully kept busy with peripheral issues like changing the monthly 4-anna membership fee of the Congress to 2,000 yards of self-spun yarn. In February, just after his release, Das and Motilal held a conversation with him, after which Gandhi declared, “There is an honest and fundamental difference. I retain the opinion that Council-entry is inconsistent with non-cooperation as I conceive it.”¹¹⁵ Durga Das, the journalist,

draws our attention to the happenings in the Central Assembly for an appreciation of Gandhi's stand. "Replying to the debate on Motilal's motion for a Round Table Conference to consider a scheme for self-government, Sir Malcolm Hailey had in February declared somewhat categorically that in no event was a change in the form of government contemplated before 1929. The Swarajists' position had thus been considerably weakened", considered Durga Das, which in turn provided strength to Gandhi.¹¹⁶ Till May, Gandhi seemed to have been 'undecided about the Swarajists. "I retain the opinion that Council-entry is inconsistent with non-cooperation as I conceive it. Nor is this difference merely a matter of interpretation of the word non-cooperation, but relates to the essential mental attitude resulting in different treatment of vital problems". Nevertheless, he was not prepared at this stage to antagonise stalwarts like Das and Nehru, so he continued with modifications. "If the work of the Swarajists prosper and the country benefits, such an ocular demonstration cannot but convince honest sceptics like me of our error, and I know Swarajists to be patriotic enough to retrace their steps when experience has disillusioned them. The purpose of Delhi and Coconada resolutions was to allow the Swarajists a chance of trying the method of Council-entry."¹¹⁷ About mid-September Gandhi began to modify his opinion on a new assessment of the Swarajists' strength; "They do represent a large section of people", he wrote.¹¹⁸ The promulgation of the Bengal ordinance and subsequent arrest of the Bengal Swarajists also prompted a second thought in Gandhi. It might be the decision taken by him not to allow the Raj to exploit the difference among themselves as suggested by Durga Das,¹¹⁹ or his choice of maintaining cordiality with the Bengal group¹²⁰ where, he was aware, the pro-Gandhi faction had never had a

sound footing, not even in the hey-day of non-cooperation. In November he issued a joint statement with Das and Motilal, reiterating almost the Coconada resolution, that "the work in connection with the Central and provincial legislatures should be carried on by the Swaraj Party on behalf of the congress." His comment on the joint communique was but to save his face. "Swarajists claim to be a growing body. They have shown firm determination, grit, discipline and cohesion. and have not feared to carry their policy to the point of defiance.It must be admitted that they have introduced a new spirit into the Indian Legislatures Though an uncompromising No-changer, I must not only tolerate their attitude and work with them, but I must even strengthen them wherever I can."¹²¹ Another defeat, of which he was hopelessly conscious "Surrender on my part it undoubtedly is. It is a conscious surrender."¹²² The Pact was ratified by the Congress at Belgaum in December 1924. In addition, the Congress, with Gandhi on the chair, withdrew the triple boycott of schools, courts and councils, and declared that the programme of the Swaraj Party would hereafter be the main programme of the Congress.

"The surrender created uneasiness among the bureaucrats. "Gandhi is now attached to the tail of Das and Nehru," wrote the Viceroy. "It is pathetic to observe the rapid decline in the power of Gandhi and the frantic attempts he is now making to cling to his position as leader at the expense of practically every principle he has hitherto advocated."¹²³ About a month and half back he held encouraging views about Gandhi's power : "Gandhi still retains a hold over the people. He has his advantage over Das and Nehru who have been making attempts to bring Gandhi in with them and thus to enable them to present a united front at the Congress."¹²⁴ The Viceroy tried to

justify Gandhi's capitulation to Das and Nehru on the ground of Gandhi's weak health : "Gandhi began by resisting the attempt (of Das and Nehru), but unsuccessfully, partly because Das and Nehru had gained an ascendancy over the public, and partly because Gandhi is in weak health and unable to conduct an active campaign."¹²⁵

Gandhi would countenance defeat in more than one ways only to keep up his alliance with Das and Motilal. Das was growing intolerant of Gandhi, so were Motilal and Vithalbhai. "How can we get rid of the Mahatma", Das exclaimed in an interview, "and put the people back on the road to the capture of power, now within our grasp ?"¹²⁶ The bitterness was aggravated at the Working Committee meeting in June, 1924, by the yarn-franchise resolution, and still more by the annulment of the Gopinath Saha resolution which was passed in the Bengal Provincial Conference at Serajgunj. The yarn franchise resolution moved by Gandhi read thus : members of the various Congress organisations should spin for at least half an hour each day and send ten tolahs of twisted yarn to the Secretary, AICC, once a month ; any member failing to do this, would be deemed to have vacated office. As regards the yarn franchise, Das stated in an interview, "The Swarajists had no objection to spin, but they strongly resented anything being forced upon them."¹²⁷ At the AICC meeting in June, 1924, Motilal said that the yarn franchise resolution was not in order and was inconsistent with the constitution of the Congress. After heated discussions and consequent walk-out by the Swarajists, Gandhi removed the much-resented penalty clause and got the resolution passed. However, Gandhi realised with what distaste his resolution was regarded. In the face of strong opposition of the no-changers, he agreed to Das, Nehru and Azad to modify his 'five boycotts', so that the pro-changers could contest

in the election of the executive bodies of the congress. Shortly afterwards he described himself as "defeated and humbled."¹²⁸ About the other resolution Das said, "The Serajgunj resolution was made the basis of so much vindictive attack on me and my party that I thought it was my duty to protest."¹²⁹ His statement expressed his self-confidence he felt no urge for expostulation for retaining his leadership. "If I lost, I have the satisfaction of knowing that 70 members of the AICC present voted in my favour as against 78" was his reply. Although Das did not maintain any direct link with the revolutionary conspiracies, hatched in Bengal, he "had to rely on the terrorists", as observed by Tripathi, "in the peculiar political situation in Bengal."¹³⁰ He could not be a party to the obliteration of a resolution which had been passed in his presence and with his vote ; so he walked out with Motilal. Gandhi although he got the resolution passed, measured his length in the situation and preferred a compromise. The bare majority with which his resolution was passed, was a "staggering revelation" to Gandhi that his policy of non-violence in thought and action received only half-hearted support from his colleagues. In his presidential address at Belgaum he asserted his faith in the triple boycott, in the same session willingly witnessed their withdrawal. In November, at the All Parties Conference at Bombay, presumably to please Das he moved a resolution demanding withdrawal of the Bengal ordinance as well as the Regulation III of 1818, both of which were used by the Government, as it claimed, for dealing with Bengal revolutionaries. Giving his voice to the Swarajist choir, Gandhi blamed the Government for throwing the net of the Ordinance on the Swarajists, whose fault, he declared, was to wreck the noxious Dyarchy. In an interview to the Associated Press Gandhi said : "I retain the opinion that repression is an

attack upon the Swaraj Party, in other words, upon 'determined and inconvenient opposition to the Government, no matter how constitutional it may be.'¹³¹

Gandhi was trying hard, but it was really difficult for him to cement the crack. The Swarajists Das, Motilal, Vithalbhai and others were earnestly searching for a way out of "the wilderness of sterile political agitation", and to come to a compromise with the authority on sharing of power. A month before his death Das declared in the Provincial Conference at Faridpur that he was prepared to negotiate "provided the Government divested itself of its discretionary powers of constraint and followed this up by proclaiming a general amnesty for all political prisoners." The offer should be read against the background of happenings in the White Hall. Birkenhead had issued a statement inviting Das "to go forward and cooperate with the Government", since Das "has expressly and formally dissociated himself and his Party entirely from all forms of violence".¹³² Gandhi did not miss the chance to hint at this 'flirtation' begun by the Secretary of State; he declared that he preferred to put through his programme "instead of entering into diplomatic relation with matchless diplomats from England." But only two days later he gave a friendly reception to Das's Faridpur speech declaring that Das had pilfered his (Gandhi's) thought but not the language. He was wooing the Swarajists unreservedly. On Das's death he came to attend the funeral where he said that he had never doubted the usefulness of Council-entry for the purpose of embarrassing the Government and showing it in the wrong. "Gandhi won the hearts of the Bengalis" by this statement, remarked Durga Das.¹³³ He contributed a leading article in *Forward*, in the course of which he wrote: "Today the Swaraj Party is a compact and well-disciplined party. No one can deny the greatness of the work done by

that party in the Legislature.”¹³⁴ As a distinguished guest in the Swaraj Party meeting in the last week of June, he drafted a resolution that endorsed “the offer of honourable cooperation with the Government and the conditions there of as laid down in Das’s Faridpur speech on May 2, 1925.”¹³⁵ In July he came further down. “I have come to the conclusion that I should absolve the Swaraj Party from all obligations under the Pact of last year” he wrote. “Not only do I personally absolve you from the restriction, but I propose to ask the forthcoming meeting of the All India Congress Committee to do likewise and place the whole machinery of the Congress at the disposal of the Swaraj Party.”¹³⁶ The comments in the Congress circle were caustic “They (the Swarajists) wanted his (Gandhi’s) cooperation on their terms slowly, then Gandhi by a series of *obiter dicta* adopted the Swarajists as his attorneys and political representatives, yielded more and more, and ultimately so much more that he effaced himself and made a complete surrender.”¹³⁷

The most ambitious dream of Desabandhu was fulfilled within a month of his death. The Swarajists got the entire nationalist organisation under them, and were able to bring before the Congress such political resolutions as they considered necessary in the interest of the country, necessitating the Congress to be no longer “a predominantly spinning association.”¹³⁸ An undiluted victory for the Swarajists, no doubt. But what were they going to do with this victory? Surely to carry non-cooperation into the Legislatures with more vehemence and impetuosity, with the full strength of the nation behind them. But what would they gain? Their previous performances amounted to nothing more than noisy scenes in the Councils and exciting reactions among the public. The gestures of Birkenhead just before and after Das’s death were clear

manifestations of the fact that the Government remained where they were, without being nervous at the Swarajist opposition, in any single affair. The Secretary of State only slyly tickled the Swarajists' impulse for coming to power. Gandhi was not blind to this outcome of Government's game with the Swarajists. After the Patna session of the AICC, which divested the *Khaddar* of all political significance, made yarn franchise only an alternative to four anna membership and committed the Congress to the Swaraj Party. Gandhi said "I am giving them (the Swarajists) a long rope. They will get nothing from Reading and Birkenhead. When they return crestfallen, Bapu will be ready to succour them."¹³⁹ This would lead us to fundamentals—what did he value more? His principles, or the unity of the Congress? In the former case, what would be his justifications for the abject surrender he had made at Belgaum or at Patna? If otherwise, he held the unity of the Congress dearer than his principles, why did he let Rajagopalachari and others bring a split at Gaya? Why did he not allow Das and Motilal to have a trial of their method as they had done to him at Nagpur? Obviously he was in two minds. At first he clung to his principles and let the Congress split. When the Swarajists had captured the Congress, its subordinate bodies and even the public imagination, he yielded to the pressure, his principles being casualties in the deal.

In Bengal the Swaraj Party was doomed with the destiny of a one-man-show. "Deshabandhu C. R. Das's sacrifice is the foundation of the Swaraj Party," wrote a leading daily. "The greatest asset of the party is still his great name."¹⁴⁰ The party suffered a definite set back at its leaders' death. Within a year of Das's demise, Raja of Santosh, the Government candidate, won the election of the President of the Council, defeating the Swarajist

candidate in a straight fight. In the Calcutta Corporation, the Swarajists' stronghold, they were beaten in the elections for Aldermen "in a manner as striking as it was unexpected."¹⁴¹ Even Subhas Bose was defeated in the Mayoral election in 1928, which was a great and astonishing news to the Viceroy.¹⁴² Fortnightly reports of the Bengal Government presented a picture of turmoil going on in the Swaraj Party—Sengupta, Sasmal, Goswami and every other leader were leading different factional groups, while members of the revolutionary parties in the Swarajist rank came to occasional clashes with the leaders.¹⁴³ At the all-India level also the picture was not in the least encouraging. The towering personality and the magnanimity of Das had composed many a difference that soon began to jut out. Personal jealousies among his aides jeopardised the integrity of the party. The election of Vithalbhai as the President of the Assembly was a welcome news to Motilal who expressed relief that "through this successful manoeuvre he had rid himself of a lieutenant whom he looked upon as a thorn in his side."¹⁴⁴ On the ruins of the Swaraj Party there arose in 1926 two distinct factions ; one, the Swarajists with their programme of obstruction and two, the Responsive Cooperationists, whose programme of obstruction was diluted with conditional cooperation with the government. The Swarajist Muslims snapped their bonds and joined the several Muslim factions under different leaders, but all tuned to the song of unjustified weightage on grounds of numerical superiority and educational backwardness.

Fortunately for the Swaraj Party, however, the achievements of its leader within the very short span of only two and half years, were not fully undone by the factional feuds after his death. Das had been able to align the "most uncompromising non-cooperator" to his side and Council-entry continued to be a part of the Congress.

programme. In Bengal Das's memory continued to be the beacon. Before the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1928, both Bose and Sengupta tried to persuade a reluctant Motilal to accept the Presidential chair. "Bengal is unanimous about you because we cannot do without you" wrote Sengupta. Bose clarified the position: "Your close association with the work and policy of the Swaraj Party is one of several reasons for which your name is universally acceptable in this province."¹⁴⁵ As late as in 1933, the D. I. B. in his weekly report wrote, "There is reason to believe that it is not only in Madras that the policy of Council-entry finds favour, for it is said also to have some support in Bengal where the influence of the late Das is still strong."¹⁴⁶ In April, 1934, Gandhi wrote, "I have made an independent study of the Council entry question. It appears to me there has always been a party within the Congress wedded to the idea of Council-entry. The reins of the Congress should be in the hands of that group, and that group alone needs the name of the Congress. They will also boycott the legislatures whenever they deem it necessary."¹⁴⁷ The Chief Secretary Hallet pointed out, "I think it is quite possible that Gandhi is shrewd enough to see that the tide is setting in favour of Council-entry, and that though he dislikes the idea, it is better than the present inactivity."¹⁴⁸ The result was: "Congressmen decide on Council-entry: All-India Swaraj Party again: Gandhi capitulates on Council-entry."¹⁴⁹ Herein lay the Swarjists' success. They had dangerously shaken to the roots of Gandhi's monolithic leadership. Newer forces stood in queue to play their part in the eviction of the uniform austerity insisted by Gandhi.

None of Das and Motilal lived in 1934 to see Gandhi's complete surrender to the policy heralded by them. But Council-entry was not just the one which Das engineered

in the political programme of the country. Though he failed to rouse the Congress enbloc, his repeated calls to organise the masses did evoke response from many quarters. Quite a number among his followers became associated with mass organisational works in the years to come. Some joined the young Communist Party of India (C. P. I.) and some others again, who liked to serve as Congressmen, worked among the masses in that capacity. Das's ideological difference with Gandhi over mass involvement was carried on after his death by his followers and in the thirties a triangular wrangle among Congress-Gandhian-Communist volunteers developed round the issue of mass organisation and that led to the complete breakdown of constructive work in the Gandhian fashion.

In the history of the communal relation also Das left his mark as a sagacious diplomat. Although in his lifetime he had failed to persuade the Congress to accept his terms for Hindu-Muslim unity, within a decade of his death the Congress Working Committee, guided by Gandhi and his devoted followers, accepted the British Prime Minister's Communal Award, based on the fundamental principle of granting concessions to the Muslims. Admittedly, "the pacts and alliances that Das made from 1921 to 1925 were fragile creations based more on his personal tact and ability than on party strength or impersonal forces."¹⁰ It was so because the Congress, instead of helping him with the party support, frustrated his attempts. In the course of coming years, the Congress sank in the morass of helplessness before the evergrowing tempo of Muslim separatism and their piled-up demands. The concessions which Das had made conditional, for only a specific period of time provisionally, to be settled finally after Swaraj was established, and were rejected as too much, were swallowed by the same Congress leaders, with further privileges added eventually even before Swaraj came.

3. Erosion of Non-violence

The Swarajists put the spoke in the wheel of Gandhian leadership. In Bengal, members of revolutionary parties were sinews of Swarajist power, both in its growth and development. They received in turn substantial help from Das, the leader of the Swaraj Party, although he did not believe in their methods. That help contributed to the revival of the revolutionary organisations which in the decades of the twenties and thirties posed a formidable challenge to one of the fundamentals of Gandhism, namely, non-violence.

A legacy :

The first land of British occupation in India, Bengal was also the first to revolt against the new master. Peasant risings, sporadic in character though, featured frequently in the early annals of British India. It will be, of course, too much to claim these to be full-blooded forces of nationalism. But the noticeable feature was that these risings had attracted the attention of the middle-class Bengali intelligentsia. The Indigo Rebellion of the 1860's was publicised by Bengali owned newspapers, especially Harish Chandra Mukherjee's *Hindu Patriot*. It created a deep sense of hatred and indignation against the British officials who shamefully guarded and protected the planters, since they were their fellow-nationals, to carry on their acts of inhuman barbarity. The arrogant claims of the Europeans and the Anglo-Indians also for special positions of honour and privilege in public functions, hanghty incivilities in dealings with the local people and the gentry and the Government's

tilt in favour of a British or an Anglo-Indian, even though palpably guilty in case of friction with an Indian, had already cut in deep furrows in the hearts of Indians. The Indigo Revolt, even though rather short lived, did its due part in preparing the field for sowing the seed of revolt against British imperialism.

A conviction grew that to the Western people nothing short of physical force made any appeal. So schools for physical training were set up, the first at Calcutta in or about 1896, by Sarala Debi, a niece of poet Rabindranath, and Pramatha Nath Mitra, a barrister. By the turn of the century these schools or *Akhras* sprang up in all the *moffussils* and district towns of Bengal. Here *lathi*, dagger-play, boxing, gymnastics and jiu-jitsu trainings were given and the revolutionary movements of Europe, their methods, practices, outcomes and philosophies were studied. The picked among the learners ultimately were enrolled as revolutionary workers. They were to take up necessary measures for vindication of rights, prestige and privileges of the Indians whenever confronted with high handed claims and incivilities of the Europeans and Anglo Indians with the connivance of the Executive. Challenges and skirmishes were very frequent and police atrocities, repression and circumvention of law by administrators worsened the situation. The climax was reached when the anti-partition *Swadeshi* movement of Bengal were on. No sooner, these issues involving persons or groups became identified with the country's emancipation.

Of all the *Akhras*, *Anusilan Samiti* emerged as the one of utmost consequence. It gathered both brains and brawns and had three broad cross-sections of members. One consisted of the arm-chair politician type who remained content with physical and intellectual culture ; two, under Bepin Pal, who advocated and strove for passive resistance

after the pattern of Parnell of Ireland and three, under Aurobinda Ghosh, Bhupendra Nath Datta and Ullaskar Datta, who believed in violent activism and started bomb-manufacture in Manicktalla.

To disparage, the government called the members of the *Akhras* and *Anusilan Samiti*, the "terrorists". Forthwith came the denial that "Terrorism is a negative idea", that "the sword of the revolutionary parties bears ideas at its edge."¹ It was declared by them also that "The programme undertaken by the revolutionaries was intended to carry on propaganda by action when speech had been muzzled."² In these passages of arms, the country sided with the revolutionaries and held them in high esteem. The country was loud in the support of the revolutionaries but if they were equally liberal in advancing financial support, laments a revolutionary, just advances could be made.³ In these stringent circumstances, Aurobinda, it is said, first advised robbery as the quick source of funds, nothing however that the money thus obtained should be regarded as loan for repayment after independence.⁴ Obviously the active revolutionaries were driven to take to this ultimate step.

Particularly during the anti-partition movement, i. e. in the beginning of the 20th century, a passion for the country's freedom seized the Bengali public. Pramatha Nath Mitra, Raja Subodh Mullick and Aurobinda Ghosh discussed about the probable lines of action. Even Rabin-dranath lent his voice and pen to the discussion. Not all however could agree to the armed uprising through secret organisations. The younger generation were particularly intoxicated by the idea. Even the school children, not yet in teens then, felt in their blood the urge for revolt against the British.⁵ Schools and Colleges became important recruiting centres and teachers the preachers and instigators as in Dacca National School, Sonarang National School,

Brojomadhab Institution of Barisal etc.⁶ A government report says, "The *Brati Samiti* of Faridpur was intimately connected with the Ishan Institution, the *Sakti Samiti* of Rajbari with the Raja S. K. Institution, the *Sadharan Samaj* of Mymensingh with the local National School and Mahishadal *Sevak Samiti* with the local Raj H. E. School".⁷ Though all the common members of the revolutionary societies and their non-participating admirers did not fully approve of robbery, they did not refuse their helping hands whenever necessary in sheltering a revolutionary or transporting his letters, parcels etc. which might contain incendiaries even.⁸ In counteraction of "revolutionary mentality", as the Government called it, it armed itself with many repressive acts like the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act (1907), the Explosive substances Act (1908), the Newspaper Act (1908), the Criminal Law Amendment Act (XIV of 1908) and the Defence of India Act (1915). Even then between 1907 and 1915 there were as many as 140 outrages.⁹ These repressive measures made the Government look more malign and in contrast the sacrifice and self immolation of the revolutionaries more awesome and honourable, in the eyes of the public and the world.

Even though according to a *Yugantar Samiti* leader, 'There was hardly any man occupying an important position in the public life of Bengal who was not a supporter of the open Swadeshi and the secret revolutionary movements. Almost all the intellectual, moral and religious leaders of Bengal gave their blessings to the movement,'¹⁰ internal jealousy and rivalry of the leaders divided the *Samitis* into numerous factions. There was another lacuna also, which was noticed only long after it had done its mischief. The oaths which the revolutionaries swore by for enrolment, the moral practices and outlooks of the *Gita* which were

stressed, the conception of the country as mother and even the slogan *Bande Mataram* jarred in the Muslim ears as smacking of Hindu beliefs and religiosity. The Muslims, the majority community of Bengal, therefore remained almost aloof. The bureaucracy, watchful of this Muslim resentment, did all they could to fan the flame of suspicion that the nationalist movement was but one of Hindu revival and Hindu domination. Favours such as employment on the preference of communal question were thrown open to the Muslims and *adibasis*, and agents, investigators and jail authorities were mainly selected from the Muslim community. A modern scholar has sought to explain Muslim antipathy towards nationalist movement by suggesting these probabilities : "Firstly the progovernment section, quite understandably, did not favour revolutionary terrorism, that was designed expressly to strike at the government ; secondly, anti-government activities, let alone terrorism, were regarded as contrary to Muslim communal interests ; thirdly, the religious aspect of the terrorist movement, having been little more than extreme Hindu nationalism, as defined by Tilak, Aurobinda, Bepin Chandra and Brahmabandhab was provocatively anti-Islamic".¹¹ Indeed most Muslims believed that fulfilment of their sectarian interests lay in the continuation of the British rule. Muzaffar Ahmed in his reminiscences wrote that "the terrorist movement in Bengal was definitely anti British but it was also a Hindu revivalist movement. Its aim was the restoration of the Hindu rule." As regards the general attitude of the contemporary Muslims, the renowned Communist leader wrote, "Considering my mental condition and the romance that lay in the terrorist movement, it was not impossible for me to join the terrorist revolutionary camp but there were certain obstacles in the way".¹² The main obstacle was the stress on Hindu

rituals. A nationalist like Azad also saw in the movement something of an anti-muslim zeal: "All the revolutionary groups were then actively anti-muslim." Perhaps he found the real reasons. He wrote, "They saw that the British Government was using the Muslims against India's political struggle and the Muslims were playing the governments' game. . . . The revolutionaries felt that the Muslims were an obstacle to the attainment of Indian freedom and must like other obstacles be removed."¹³ Thus cooperation of a very large section of people was lost which otherwise could have changed the pace as well as fate of the national struggle.

The Indian National Congress for the first time in 1920 accepted a revolutionary programme, a programme of action involving all sections of the people. The programme was accepted in conditional time-bound form by Das, the eminent barrister, who had earned the gratefulness of the revolutionaries by his legal acumen and large-hearted charities. The released revolutionaries found a way here and joined the congress as its volunteers in 1921.¹⁴

The programme initiated by Gandhi in the Congress was not altogether unknown in Bengal. In 1905-8, in order to thwart the government proposal of partitioning Bengal, non-cooperation on a wider basis than outlined by Gandhi, was urged on the people. "The Indian people under Indian leadership and with Indian personnel were to organise themselves into an administration with proper branches to look after their own agriculture and industry, education and sanitation, litigation and policing without any attempt at coming into clash with the existing British administration and simply ignoring it," such was the programme adopted by the passive resisters of the Swadeshi days. They believed that "the existence and growth of the indigenous administrative body would be the greatest resistance to the foreign

state imposed on the people".¹⁵ At Barisal Aswini Kumar Dutta's Swadesh Bandhab Samiti assumed the position and authorities of something like a shadow government and looked after Swadeshi, national education, social uplift Hindu-Muslim unity, arbitration courts, vigilance corps etc. Gandhi's programme did not include the formation of a shadow government and many such other objectives. But still the revolutionaries found in Gandhi's programme the possibility of greater mass contact and mass involvement in resisting the bureaucracy and so they all responded to the call of Gandhi, transmitted by Chittaranjan Das.

A Period of Understanding

As noted above, in 1920 the revolutionaries sick of inactivity and bereft of an organisation looked with changed attitude towards the Congress. Bengali leaders including Das and Pal got defeated at the Calcutta session of the Congress over the non-cooperation programme which they wanted to ammend. Das led a contingent of ex-detenus to Nagpur for the reversal or suitable modification of the September resolution. The government noted that about 300 ex-detenus and ex-convicts of the Dacca *Anusilan Samiti*, under the leadership of Srish Chandra Chatterjee, went to Nagpur to support Das.¹⁶ It was also estimated by the government that Das paid Rs. 36,000 from his own pocket for the delegates from Bengal and Assam.¹⁷ Das accepted absolutely non-violent non-cooperation for a year only, and he requested revolutionaries to suspend their programme of armed rising during Gandhi's promised year of Swaraj.¹⁸ At Nagpur, in the biting cold of a December midnight six leaders of the *Yugantar* Party met Gandhi at the Congress camp. The interview has been narrated in details by their leader Bhupendra K. Dutta.¹⁹ They agreed to suspend

violent activities during the period of the non-cooperation movement, but that did not mean, they said, that they would give up the idea of liberating India by violent revolutionary risings. On the otherhand, they expressed their steady and unshaken faith in violence. "Your movement will at once raise the struggle to a new pitch", they said to Gandhi, "but liberation will not be possible without the use of arms." Dutta then went to Pondicherry to seek the permission of Aurobindo, who had by then taken the life of an ascetic. He approved of the steps taken by Dutta and his party. "Carry the message of revolt to the people. Don't make a fetish of non-violence, a religion of non-violence" was his advice. Despite his belief that Gandhi could not bring independence, he asked the revolutionaries to take advantage of the situation created by Gandhi's attempt at bringing the masses in politics. Earlier Aurobindo advised his partymen to involve the masses in the nationalist struggle. That would be the real source of strength for the nationalists, he said, as it was impossible for them to join in a race of armaments with the imperialists.²⁰ Thus the urge for pulling up the crumbled revolutionary societies, the promise of Gandhi to launch an all-India mass-movement and Das's active involvement in the programme—these three forces made it possible to weld together the seemingly impossible polar politics of violence and non-violence.

The single reason that guided the revolutionaries in large numbers to join Gandhi, was that the movement would inject fresh impetus to the frustrated workers.²¹ Basanta Kumar Majumdar, Satyen Mitra and Dinesh Das Gupta, all ex-detenus, were selected as Assistant Secretaries, while Arun C. Guha, a *Yugantar* leader, was appointed as a clerk in the BPCC.²² They entered the Congress as the new forum of activity and not out of reverence for Gandhi's non-viole-

nce. Contrarily, they emphasised the alternative aspects of Gandhi's creed or interpreted his words in their own way. "Non-violence may be accepted as creed or policy", or, "Had India sword, I would have asked her to draw it. But as she had no sword, I ask her to adopt Non-violent Non-cooperation" these were their selected quotations from Gandhi before an audience.²³ It was obvious that they would set their heart to strengthening their own parties under cover of Congress works. Early in January, 1921, Police reports from Bengal unearthed such attempts to organise revolutionary parties, specially at Faridpur, where ex-detenu Purna Das was endeavouring to form secret organisations in furtherance of the Non-cooperation movement, and increased activity on the part of released state-prisoners and of ex-detenus was reported throughout the province.²⁴ The government reported the extreme indifference with which the extremist leaders accepted Gandhi's insistence on learning Hindusthani and the use of *Charka*, which they said "should not be taken too literally."²⁵ The hazardous plight of the government during the activity of the revolutionaries in the last two decades was still fresh and pricking to the bureaucrats. So they looked with suspicion at Das's reliance on the revolutionaries to work out non-violent non-cooperation programme. "He (Das) had collected in the central body, the National Service Board, the best brains and organising power of the old revolutionary secret societies in Bengal"—reported the I. B., and it apprehended a reproduction of the Sinn Fein method in Bengal.²⁶ In every move of the Congress in Bengal the government noticed the revival of revolutionary organisations. "Besides the enrolment of volunteers at various places in the presidency", noted the government, "whose duties are to discipline the people and to maintain order . . . and incidentally to shoot down opposition speakers . . . There are revival of secret societies in

Dacca, at which the use of *lathi*, sword, and dagger is taught.”²⁷

The suspicion of the government was, however, not totally unfounded. It was difficult for the Bengalis, the traditional *Sakti* worshippers, to accept non-violence wholeheartedly. “The majority of Hindus in East Bengal are *Saktas*,” wrote Ronaldshay, “nearly every temple is a *Kalibari*”.²⁸ It is interesting to note that one of the staunch Gandhians in Bengal, Nripendra Chandra Banerjee, admitted that “it was hard for a Bengali *Sakta* to follow Gandhi.”²⁹ It would be, of course, too much to lay the entire responsibility on the *Sakta* mentality for Bengal’s aversion towards non-violence. A large number of revolutionaries did not accept non-violence as a policy even temporarily. They continued to voice their faith in armed revolutionary risings. The *Anusilan* Party in general decided to oppose the non-cooperation movement. Only some of its members disagreed with the party decision and joined Das. The *Anusilan* Party started a Bengali daily *Sankha* and a pamphlet *Hak Katha* to carry on counter-propaganda against non-cooperation. Upendranath Banerjee’s satiric features on non-cooperation, non-violence. *Khadi* and other items of Gandhi’s programme, published in Barin Ghosh’s *Bijoli* and *Atmasakti* were very much appreciated.³⁰ The *Hindusthan* spared no chance to plead for violence. “Those who read newspapers find that though De Valera has caused rivers of blood to flow,” wrote the journal, “committed many murders, and done much harm to the government, the Prime Minister of England wishes to meet and discuss the question of peace with him. . . On the otherhand, Lord Reading did not ask for an interview with Mahatma Gandhi, who is an advocate of peace.”³¹ In a more assertive way the paper stated, “By inviting De Valera Mr. Lloyd George has, in a way,

submitted to the Sinn Fein propaganda of assassination and outrage, and this fact will not remain a secret to the people of India. Every nation in the world has attained freedom by bloodshed."³² The paper was determined to bring the country out of the grasp of non-violence. "Why did the bomb disappear from the land? Mahatma Gandhi by inaugurating the principle of non-violent non-cooperation has entirely changed the situation and removed the possibility of a revolution",³³ wrote the paper in disgust.

Members of the secret societies, who had joined the non-cooperation movement, did not, except a few, sacrifice their ultimate aim of armed revolution; their statements to Gandhi about the creed of violence was categorical. It was Gandhi who had to come down for compromise, since he felt that it was not possible at that stage of national awakening to inaugurate an all-India movement without the active cooperation of the Bengalis. Taking particular care not to offend the feelings of the votaries of violence, he urged them to give him a chance, and in order to placate them, went as far as to say that non-violence was only a part of his policy. Speaking at Kumartuli Park at Calcutta in December, 1920, he said: "I have confessed that although non-violence is my creed, what I believe is, and what I feel necessary is, that rather than have the yoke of the Government in the fashion in which it is imposed on us, I would welcome violence."³⁴ He repeated his views at Dacca: "Our religion does not teach us to cut the throats of Englishmen with our swords. If we could have used swords in India, these men, Mohamed Ali and Shaukat Ali, would never remained silent. He who does not draw the sword at the proper time is a fool, and he who uses his sword at an improper time, is also imprudent."³⁵ These were reiterations of the view he had expressed in the *Young India* of 11 August, : "I do believe that,

where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that, she should, in a cowardly manner, become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour." At Nagpur, during the Congress session, he appealed for having a chance for a non-violent fight, "I only want that my Bengali friends and all the other friends who have come to this great assembly with a fixed determination to seek nothing but the betterment of their country, to seek nothing but the advance of their respective rights, to seek nothing but the conservation of national honour . . . , I know before we have done with this great battle on which we have embarked at the special session of the Congress, we have to go probably, possibly through a sea of blood, but let it not be said of us or any one of us", he indulged in sentimentality, "that we are guilty of shedding blood, but let it be said by generations yet to be born that we suffered, that we shed not somebody's blood but our own,"⁸⁶ The protagonists of violence obliged Gandhi by giving him one year's time for a non-violent struggle, Themselves being part and parcel of the movement led by Gandhi, they had seen how the energies of an entire nation, though without arms, could, within a span of twelve months only, force the mightiest of imperial powers to seek terms for compromise. Still then, their faith in the inevitability of a violent struggle as the last phase of the Indian freedom movement, remained unshaken.⁸⁷ At the Ahmedabad Congress, when Reading's peace-making venture had just been thwarted and the movement was in full swing, Hasrat Mohani moved a resolution both in the Subjects Committee and the open session, seeking for a change of the Congress creed so as to include the attainment of complete independence "by all possible and proper means." In his speech he referred to violence and guerilla warfare as means of

attaining independence.³⁸ Gandhi was shrewd enough to see through the implications of such references, and in a way of answering to Mohani, he said that if after fair and full trial of his methods, those methods failed to achieve their purpose, he would make way for those who had other methods to try.³⁹ In the absence of any powerful leader like Das, Nehru or Lajpat who were then in prison, Gandhi succeeded in bringing about a change in the volunteer's pledge. "So long as the policy of non-violence is continued by the Nation" was deleted and instead "Non-violence alone could assist in attaining the ends of the Congress", was inserted.

But with all his alacrity about non-violence, Gandhi could not impose his conviction on the people. The record of events from the Calcutta Special Congress in September, 1920, to the Chauri-Chaura incident in February, 1922, would reveal how hopelessly Gandhi had failed to implant in the people the creed of non-violence. The country as a whole, let alone the violent activists of Bengal accepted non-violence only as an experimental method, and that too, for only a short period. The soldiers of the non-violent struggle joyfully remember the story that Bengali volunteers were beaten by the Maharashtrian delegates at the Calcutta Congress and how the Bengalis took revenge at Nagpur.⁴⁰ There is, of course, ample scope for doubt about the veracity of government reports that complained of coercion, torture and threats of social boycott practised by non-violent satyagrahis, while Congressmen claimed 'peaceful picketing' during the non-cooperation movement. Nevertheless, Gandhi's persuasions could not hold in check the growth of revolutionary mentality in Bengal, nor could he totally stop the manufacture of bombs and explosives. The remarkable progress in the making of such things, used in the near future, definitely points to experiments

that were done during these years. Moreover, the revolutionary propaganda had never waned in Bengal; their journals used to sway the Bengali mind during the period of non-cooperation as it did before. The activities of the *Anusilan* members in this direction had already been referred to. On the whole, non-violence struck no firm roots on the soil of Bengal, even when the country was under the spell of a non-violent struggle; and the resurgence of violence was the only thing one could expect after that spell was over.

Revolutionary Mentality

The Congress provided the revolutionaries with the opportunity for recruitment, reorganisation and re-shaping of their own party. For a year they worked in the open and realised the facilities of openness in organising a successful rising on the national level through an all-India organisation like the Congress. They set themselves to non-cooperation with all their heart, but all of a sudden the Bardoli decision pushed their hearts in their boots. It was for Das that they worked out Gandhi's non-cooperation, and it was again Das who relieved the country by placing before them the programme of election campaign for Council-entry. On January 1, 1923, Swaraj Party was born. The revolutionaries joined it and with their assistance Das captured majority in the BPCC. Ultimately by the middle of 1923, they became the formidable party in the AICC.

Most of the *Anusilan* Party members were on the watch. The Midnapur jail provided the leaders of *Anusilan* and other revolutionary parties to meet together and decide to present a united front of the different revolutionary groups in the campaign for Council entry. On

April, 1922, in the Bengal Provincial Conference at Chittagong Basanti Devi laid down Das's new programme of Council entry and the revolutionaries of all groups accepted it. They had nothing in common with Gandhi's ideals and principles except the target 'revolution', and when the promised year had elapsed without *Swaraj*, they could revive their own methods. They had known Das better and were ready to follow him. The *Anusilan* Party also decided to join the Swaraj Party. From Chittagong Bhupen Dutta set out for a tour of east Bengal and Manoranjan Gupta and Naresh Chaudhuri for that of north Bengal. They wanted to communicate the idea of using the Congress as a camouflage, to work with the Congress on the one hand and collect arms on the other. Unfortunately the leaders were arrested under Regulation III of 1818 before they could embark on their new programme.

In dealing with the Swarajist campaign in Bengal it was seen that Das's rise to power was spectacular. Within a very short span of time he converted the BPCC into a pro-changer group, and it is no use denying the fact that the help accorded to him by the revolutionary party members made his task easier. He appreciated and valued their cooperation and tried to help them in various ways. They were given jobs in the Swarajist controlled Calcutta Corporation.⁴¹ The Corporation further undertook to support the detenus and dependent family members of political sufferers. Atul Sen, member of the AICC sent a resolution for considering at the Belgaum Congress the establishment of a fund to be called "Political Sufferers' fund."⁴² The government alleged that the Corporation and BPCC funds were lavishly used by revolutionaries for making bombs and violent acts, and recruitment in revolutionary parties went unabated with the cooperation of the

leader of the Swaraj Party in Bengal.⁴³ The I. B. reported of a grant of Rs. 15,000 to the revolutionaries from the Swaraj Party fund along with the promise of a further Rs. 75,000 during 1923-24.⁴⁴ It is true that for a prolonged period in 1923 Swaraj Party offices housed those of the revolutionaries,⁴⁵ but the allegation of payment of money by Das for violent activities is baseless. Not only did the recipients disown such payments,⁴⁶ Das's own attitude towards violent acts would disprove the allegation. "I am very much fond of some of these young men" said Das about the revolutionaries, "but, their acts are against the interest of the country. Their activities will throw the country 25 years back. Besides, this spirit of violence will not disappear with the attainment of *Swaraj*, contrarily, then it will lead to civil wars in the event of any difference of opinion."⁴⁷ It is hardly possible to believe that a man holding such views about violence, would give monetary help to organisations avowed to create disorder in the country by terroristic acts. In their urge to show the Swaraj Party as a cover for the party of violence, the I. B. scented in every move of the Swarajists the attempt to help and protect the revolutionaries. "The very first act of the Swarajists in the Council was to pass resolutions demanding the repeal of the Regulation III," so reported the Bengal government.⁴⁸ The Swarajist members of the Council were elected by the votes of their countrymen, and they were no doubt indebted for their success to the election-campaigner volunteers, who were largely the *Yugantar* and *Anusilan* Party members. Was it possible for the Swarajist Councillors to remain silent and appear as anti-nationals, when the government rounded up all and sundry of the country's young men as suspected terrorists? The government abused the Regulation III as the best weapon to crush revolutionary terrorism and in 1923, arrested a

numbers of Swaraj Party volunteers also, who once happened to be revolutionary leaders. Some of them were even transported to Burma. Bhupen Dutta and Jiban Chatterjee managed to send a memorandum from the Basin Jail at Burma, to Gandhi via Das, showing how the government was using agents provocateurs for a got-up revolutionary movement and on that plea imprisoned Swaraj Party members. The memorandum met with the desired effect. Gandhi at once strongly criticised government actions, as trying to wreck the Swaraj Party whose "non-cooperation within the councils" had dealt a hard blow to the government.⁴⁹ The revolutionaries thus achieved a glorious victory,—they had won Gandhi to their side.

Both Gandhi and the Swaraj Party leaders blamed the government for its repressive measures. But the repression could not be said to be unprovoked. The revolutionary press had been active throughout in journalistic parade of the revolutionary mentality. *Bijoli* published serially the *Story of the Bomb Era* by Barin Ghosh. *Sankha*, *Prabartak*, *Basumati*, *Sanatan*, *Bangabani*, *Yugantar* even *Narayan* under Das's editorship published articles on the prison life of revolutionaries and life-sketches of martyrs. Upen Banerjee's article in *Prabartak* was an open challenge to non-violence, "Nowadays, when we are told on all sides that non-violence, is the supreme virtue and that endurance is the chief means for serving one's own country, I do indeed listen to in silence, but at the same time the picture of Kanailal's (Dutta) face with its supreme peace is recalled to my mind. Were those the eyes of a murderer, or a rebel, or of an irreligious man? The innermost soul does not admit that, and the mind only says that the truths of religion rise superior to violence or non-violence."⁵⁰ The suspension of the non-cooperation movement, which had

temporarily kept in check the outburst of violence, Das's break with the non-violent Gandhi camp in the Congress and his alliance with the revolutionaries and capture of the BPCC, all these combined to rouse the government's suspicion of a possible resurgence of the terrorist movement. "The penetration of the Congress machine had very important consequences", noted the I. B., "for it helped the terrorist party internally in the matter of recruitment and organisation and externally in the matter of public sympathy."⁵¹ The nervousness of the I. B. is explicit in the report which said ;— "Every cause of unrest was exploited and every centre of agitation utilised for the dissemination of terrorism and the winning of new recruits."⁵² To the government the Swaraj Party was a component of the revolutionary machine. Through it the revolutionaries would be able to control the Congress hierarchy from the DCCs to the AICC.

In 1923, the activities of group of revolutionaries added fuel to the fire. In May a robbery was committed with double murder at Kona near Howrah, and the Ulta-danga Post Office in north Calcutta was looted ; in July they followed up with another robbery in Garpar Road and murder of a post-master at Sankharitola. The police held the *Yugantar* Party responsible for these acts, but the revolutionaries disowned the allegation. They, on the other hand, believed that police agents initiated these actions with the help of the new recruits of the revolutionaries. They were easily arrested and their confessions helped the police to strike at the centre of the revolutionary organisations. Baren Ghosh was convicted in the Sankharitola murder case. The revolutionaries identified the police agent as Sisir Ghosh who had recruited himself in the party of Santosh Mitra and involved Baren Ghosh in the

murder of the post-master.⁵³ In December a daring robbery was committed at Chittagong when Rs. 17,000 that belonged to the Assam-Bengal Railways was snatched. The most daring event in this series was the murder of a European named Day in January, 1924, in mistake for the Police Commissioner Sir Charles Tegart. The murderer was Gopinath Saha who made no secret of his attempt to kill the Police Commissioner whom the revolutionaries regarded as one of their bitterest enemies.⁵⁴ In March, "a bomb factory, fully equipped with explosives and implements for loading and fitting bomb-shells" was unearthed by the Calcutta Police. Attempt on the life of Bruce in April and on an informer in August followed. The government claimed to have information that throughout 1924 the revolutionaries were planning to assassinate police officers, high government officers and suspects of their own party.⁵⁵ At least five such attempts were made between July and October. The government repeatedly hinted at Das's and the Swaraj Party's complicity in the revolutionary politics, and the European community supported the government allegation. The government claimed to have the information that Das was helping the absconder Bipin Ganguli, and that his lieutenants Satyen Mitra, Secretary of the Swaraj Party, and Harikumar Chakravarti were actively participating in revolutionary conspiracies.⁵⁶ In June, the Bengal Provincial conference at Sirajgunj passed a resolution expressing admiration for the spirit of self-sacrifice exhibited by the martyr Gopinath Saha. The Calcutta corporation passed an identical resolution condoling the death of the martyr. Das's organ *Forward* gave much importance to the trial of Saha. It printed in heavy types his dying message that directly made the government responsible for the situation.⁵⁷ Subhas Bose led the procession

to demand the body of Saha from jail authorities.⁵⁸ The government was always aware of, as well as alert about the mix up of violence with non-violence in Bengal Congress. By now the Bengal government was firm in its conviction that the Congress was turning to a violent revolutionary organisation in Bengal. The Corporation resolution on Saha was, according to the government, "a direct incitement to the youth of Bengal to follow the example of the murderer."⁵⁹ The Sirajganj Conference created the conviction in the European society that the "Swaraj Party has encouraged and is encouraging political assassinations and intimidations."⁶⁰

These continuous insinuations by the bureaucracy created a feeling of uneasiness in Das. Far from being an instigator he was critical of the misguided ideology of the militant revolutionaries. He issued a manifesto disclaiming all allegations by the government, : "It is indeed surprising to me that there should be such a complete misconception of the aim and actions of the Swaraj Party. It is all the more surprising that this should be so in spite of the incessant preaching and teaching against any kind of violence of Mr. Gandhi for the last six years, in which myself and the other leaders of the Swaraj Party wholeheartedly joined. It is also unintelligible to me that in spite of my speeches and the speeches of other leaders of the Swaraj Party and our definite and unequivocal condemnation of violence both in public and in private that this apprehension should continue to work in the minds of Europeans either in India or in England."⁶¹ But the government did not wait to see the effect of Das's express disalignment. After the Sankharitola murder several important leaders including Subhas Bose were arrested under Regulation III. This action checked but could not stop the overt acts that had started since May, 1923. The

Bengal government asked for extra power to deal with the situation ; so the Governor-General issued an Ordinance arming the executive with powers similar to those they had had under the Defence of India Act. On the early morning of 25 October, 1924, the government made a clean sweep of the so—thought Bengal ‘hotheads’. Sixty-nine persons were arrested that day and twelve others later, while searches were conducted at numerous places in the province.⁶² This was a severe blow to the revolutionaries who had just begun to reorganise. The immediate aim of the government was fulfilled. The raids yielded nothing like bombs, explosives or other weapons, excepting some proscribed literature corroborating the revolutionaries’ claim that the 1923 acts were instigated by agents provocateurs. A period of lull in Indian politics followed—Gandhi remained busy with the All India Spinners’ Association, and the militants were rendered innocuous behind the bars. The Swaraj Party protested against the Ordinance in and outside the Council. A bill to replace the Ordinance could not be introduced in the Bengal Council because of Swarajist opposition. Within a month of the promulgation of the Ordinance about one hundred public meetings were held in Bengal to condemn the Ordinance as calculated to stifle legitimate political activities.⁶³ Motilal moved a resolution in the Central Assembly denouncing the Bengal Ordinance. “It might be admitted that there was a revolutionary movement, and that there was some organisation which directed its operations”, he said in moving the resolution. “But the move was not so deep-seated as to call for any extraordinary action and suppression of the ordinary criminal law. Stories of dacoity were being fabricated by the unscrupulous police to justify their action.” His resolution for withdrawal of the Ordinance was carried by 58 votes for and 45 against.⁶⁴

Even then the vein of violence never left Bengal, it passed into a dormant state only for the time being. The policy of the revolutionary leaders, who remained outside, was, as the government believed, "to use the consequent period of quiet for recruiting on a large scale. increasing the funds of the revolutionaries, and preparing, by laying in stocks of bombs and explosives, for an outbreak on a national scale."⁶⁵ The Dacca *Anusilan Samiti* was allegedly engaged in forging currency notes, and two of its members were arrested in that connection.⁶⁶ Bomb-making was carried on and the police unearthed a bomb-making factory with huge stocks of explosives. Early in 1925 the police intercepted a four-page pamphlet, described as an organ of the Revolutionary Party of India and issued over the signature of one Vijoy Kumar, whom the government identified as Sachin Sanyal.⁶⁷ "This foreign rule must be abolished" declared the pamphlet ; "They have no justification to rule over India except the justification of the sword, and therefore the revolutionary party has taken to the sword."

The years between 1923 and 1927 posed a trying time for the revolutionaries. An immediate upsurge was unthinkable. The government was fighting tooth and nail against any attempt at their reorganisation. All attempts of the Swarajist Councillors at repeating the ill-famed ordinance ended in helpless failure. At the Bengal Council Sengupta declared that the Swarajists would continue their wholesale opposition unless certain concessions were made by the government such as the repeal of the Ordinance.⁶⁸ On the face of every opposition, the Governor certified a Bill that was to replace the Ordinance and remain in force for five years. To keep the spirit of violent revolt alive the exasperated revolutionaries such as Sachin Sanyal and Yogesh Chatterjee started communicating with M. N. Roy's agents in India and tried to secure help from the Comintern.

A group of imprisoned revolutionaries created a stir in May, 1926 when they killed Rai Bahadur Bhupen Chatterjee, a distinguished officer of the I. B., within the Alipore jail. This was an act of retaliation. Promoderanjan Chaudhuri and Anantahari Mitra, both accused for the murder, were hanged in the presence of their friends. The heroic manner in which the convicts reached the gallows and the reverential acclaim with which their friends witnessed the execution must have unnerved the authorities. Because, instead of creating horror, the punishment raised the morale of the revolutionaries and intensified hatred and bitterness against the bureaucracy.⁶⁹ The government at best had held them in check, but had not vampirised their energy. Unnerved, the government made a thorough review of the revolutionary situation in Bengal from 1908 onwards, and prepared a note in which it was said "The revolutionary movement has never been static ; on the contrary it has continually sought to widen its sphere of influence and swell the number of its adherents. In both respects it has succeeded in making considerable headway, with the result that there has been a steady increase in numbers both of active or potential revolutionaries, and still more of the revolutionary minded."⁷⁰ The government had appraised the situation correctly, but failed to apply the required anodyne. The repressive measures contrarily added to the number of sympathisers to the revolutionaries. To meet the situation at the end of 1927 there was a marked increase in the sanctioned strength of the Police officers and rank (391 and 5,230 respectively) in Bengal. Moreover, the Governor placed in the Legislative Council a demand for a grant, to make increase in the scale of pay of constables from Rs. 18 to Rs. 22 per month.⁷¹ Raids and arrests were carried on indiscriminately which furthered the dislike of the people.

The association of Das and Bose with the revolution-

aries created among the bureaucrats a firm conviction about their secret involvement in the revolutionary conspiracies. Little could they realise that it went to Das's credit to channelise the militancy in other directions like electioneering, municipal and social works. In an interview Das stated that one of the reasons for his non-acceptance of ministerial responsibility was that the government was repressive and revengeful.⁷² Joining of Bengal revolutionaries to the Congress ranks created suspicion not only in the bureaucrats, but there grew a certain amount of misunderstanding about Das among some Congress leaders also including Gandhi. The revolutionaries did never give up their faith in armed struggles, and even when engaged in constitutional and other sorts of activities, did not fail to bolster up a revolutionary mentality in the province. Their unmitigated faith in violence was sure to create a rift between themselves and Gandhi.

The Congress and the Bengal Revolutionaries.

Both the *Yugantar* and *Anushilan* parties joined the Congress with the ostensible aim of transforming it to a violent revolutionary organisation. The promulgation of the Bengal Ordinance created such a situation that the Congress as a whole sympathised with the revolutionaries as the victims of governmental repression. In a joint statement with Das and Motilal, Gandhi said, "whereas a policy of repression has been commenced in Bengal by the local government with the sanction of the Governor-General, and whereas this repression is aimed in reality not at the party of violence, but at the Swaraj Party in Bengal, and, therefore, it has become a matter of immediate necessity to invite and secure the cooperation of all parties for putting forth the united strength of the nation against the policy of repression."⁷³ He continued to criticise the government through

his other writings also. "Deshbandhu Das, by his work in the Bengal Council, has shown that the Bengal Government has not the popular opinion behind it," he wrote in the *Young India*. "The theory that he has set up a system of terrorism must be rejected. There is no evidence to support the charge. You cannot win popular elections by terrorism, nor can you hold a large party together by it." His condemnation of the government was unequivocal: "The summary arrest of such men (members of Swaraj Party who, he said, enjoyed public confidence) under extraordinary powers is the surest condemnation of the existing system of government. . . It is no doubt a demonstration of their ability to impose their authority upon a people more numerous than they, but it is also a demonstration of barbarism that lies beneath a thin coating of civilisation".⁷⁴ At the same time he tried to dissuade the revolutionaries from the path of violence. "Your love of the country commands my admiration," he said to the believers in violence, "but you will permit me to say that your love is blind. In my opinion India's freedom will not be won by violence but only by the purest suffering without retaliation."⁷⁵

In June, 1925, a severe misfortune befell Bengal in the death of Das. Subhas had been listed as a "dangerous revolutionary" by the Bengal police, so they found out enough plea for keeping him under arrest. During 1925 he was serving in the far off Mandalay prison. In the vacuum caused by Das's death and Subhas Bose's removal to the Mandalay prison, the old rivalry for control of the BPCC between *Yugantar* and *Anusilan* parties resurged. Sen Gupta, installed by Gandhi to the office of the President of BPCC, in succession to Das, soon found the place too hot for him. Although he valued and coveted the alliance of the revolutionaries, he would not allow their militancy to go its own way and would rather direct it to only peaceful and cons-

tructive ways, just as Das used to do. This brought about the birth of a faction called *Karmi Sangha* at the instance of Suresh C. Das, a *Yugantar* member who did not see eye to eye with Sen Gupta. After his release from detention, Amarendra Nath Chatterjee assumed the Presidentship of this *Sangha*, many active *Yugantar* members joined it and in December 1926, an exasperated Sen Gupta resigned. Sasmal, the accredited leader of Contai Union Board Satyagraha, 1921, and an ardent follower of Gandhi succeeded Sen Gupta. He was however a *Persona-non-grata* with the revolutionaries and so Subhas Bose became the first Chief Executive Officer of Calcutta Corporation, though Das himself had selected Sasmal first for the post. Again after his election to the Council, although Sasmal had joined the Swaraj Party in 1926, probably with an eye to the office of the President of the Council, he was not allowed to contest on behalf of the party by its President Sen Gupta himself.⁷⁶ This Sasmal, as President of BPCC failed to gauze the strength of the revolutionaries nor could win their favour and very unwittingly indeed branded the latter (though correctly) openly as never having eschewed violence.⁷⁷ Motilal had to comment: "Sasmal seems to be bent on discrediting the party, simply because of the personal squabbles between him and some members."⁷⁸ Sasmal's bid to leadership was doomed and he resigned. In 1927 Subhas Bose was released from Mandalay jail. He was given an enthusiastic reception, felicitated in a number of public meetings and steered into the office of the President of the BPCC, all by *Yugantar* leaders. Subhas was intimate also with the Swaraj Party stalwarts popularly known as the Big Five.⁷⁹ The scramble for supremacy on the BPCC still continued, inclined in favour of *Yugantar* and so the *Anusilan* group veered round Sen Gupta. The fight went on unabated for control of the BPCC, its execu-

tive council, the Corporation of Calcutta, and representation in the AICC. It is so unfortunate that the great goal of independence of the country passed to the background for some time at least. *Liberty*, the organ of Bose and *Advance*, that of Sen Gupta, engaged themselves in mud-slinging and mutual vilifications. Letters of complaints overwhelmed Jawaharlal, the Secretary and Motilal, the President of the AICC. By concerted appeals and efforts a transitory patch-up could be made, just before the AICC session at Calcutta, when J. M. Sen Gupta was made the President of the reception Committee and Dr. B.C. Roy, one of the Big Five, his Secretary. Bose led as G.O.C. a volunteer corps in pure military form, composed entirely of *Yugantar* members. This Corps was continued under the new name of Bengal Volunteers and the wary government, scenting mischief observed, "they (the Bengal Volunteers) intended to be their fighting force when rising was brought about."⁸⁰ The motion of complete independence of India, moved in the Madras Congress of December 1927 had been similarly suspected in Government circles as "alliance of congress with terrorism in Bengal". "They drew up a scheme for complete independence" noted the I.B., "This scheme was discussed at the Madras Congress of 1927".⁸¹

During the Congress week at Calcutta in 1928, when Gandhi was blazing high up in the political firmament of India, an all-India Youth Conference was held where K.F. Nariman was the Chairman and Bhupati Mazumdar (a *Yugantar* leader) was the Secretary. "The pandal which held an audience of 8,000 youths" so goes the I.B. report, "was hung with photographs of well-known revolutionaries and assassins, and was decorated with mottos and aphorisms on such topics as independence, revolution, liberty, death etc. The whole proceedings were pervaded with a revolutionary tone."⁸² Admittedly the Congress in Bengal was in the grip

of the erstwhile revolutionary party members but the Government report that "they made several attempts to commit the Bengal Congress Committee to a violent programme,"⁸³ is more pre-conceptual than factual. The bureaucrats were obviously nervous and an Anglo-Indian newspapers published news of police activity to unearth a violent conspiracy. This called for sarcastic comments of Indian newspapers : "It is indeed a remarkable phenomenon that whenever there is a talk of the release of political prisoners or repeal of the repressive laws, anarchists rear their heads and obligingly give the Police a proof of their existence and even a clue to their detection."⁸⁴

The patched up unity of the revolutionaries in the BPCC broke down shortly after. Complaints and counter complaints kept the political horizon surcharged. When Bose organised a memorial committee for Yatin Das (an internee who died after 63 days' hungerstrike) Prof. Nripendra Chandra Banerjee (*Anusilan*) protested in writing to the AICC. Jawaharlal wrote back in disgust, "It is very unfortunate that there should always be the element of competition in our national activities."⁸⁵ Even then complaints poured on. Profulla Ghosh and 118 others questioned the validity of the BPCC election.⁸⁶ Habiganj committee that of Sylhet DCC election⁸⁷ and Chittagong of its District Committee election. Jawaharlal requested on the one hand the BPCC to mend their ways which have alienated so many DCC's and on the other hand, the disgruntled Congressmen to render allegiance to the BPCC.⁸⁸ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, deputed by the AICC succeeded in bringing the contenders to a compromise once again on the eve of the Lahore session.

The situation in the country was then tense. Peasants and laboures were on tip-toe for some sort of fight to gain their rights ; every city expressed vehemence at Simon

Commission's visit by observing total strikes ; stray incidents of outrage by revolutionaries indicated the Youth's restiveness and the country's acclaim. Bose considered the time fully ripe for a countrywide rise on revolt whereas Gandhi thought otherwise and applied brake on the rising mood. To mollify, he gave pedantic explanations of independence as was accepted at the 1927 Congress.⁹⁰ At the Calcutta Congress Gandhi's manoeuvres and persuasions bore fruit and the demand of independence was toned down to Dominion Status within the British empire, if the British Government could agree to it within 31 December, 1929. This midway compromise appeared to the vibrant prowling youths extremely disheartening and Gandhi's image as a leader in India's fight for freedom slipped down from the lofty height it had attained. Sen Gupta's position as the leader of Bengal Congress at that time was not steady⁹¹ and his acceptance of the Dominion Status resolution without sincere attempts to ratify the BPCC resolution for full independence, passed under his own Presidentship, made him all the more unreliable to the *Yugantar* group.

Gandhi felt the erosion of soil under his feet in Bengal. Once before, by annulling the BPCC resolution on Gopinath Saha in the AICC he had lost giant friends like C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru. To obviate such a rift and yet keep the admirers of violence off from direct action, he coaxed the young to keep ready for the fight,⁹² which was impending, cautioning in the same breath against any outburst of violence. "There is so much violence in the atmosphere immediately surrounding us, politically minded part of India, that a bomb thrown here and a bomb thrown there causes little perturbation. and probably there is even joy over such an event in the hearts of some", he wrote deprecatingly. He was evidently unnerved when an unsuccessful bomb attack was made on the Viceroy's train

on 23 December. He reminded the youths that he had promised to launch a non-violent movement at the turn of the year, if talks with the Viceroy failed. "Let us think then for a moment what would have happened if the Viceroy had been seriously injured or killed. There certainly would have been no meeting of the 23rd ultimo and therefore no certainty as to the course to be adopted by the Congress." He tried to explain the dangers of such actions. "Take again the net result of political violence practised in this country. Every time violence has occurred, we have lost heavily, that is to say military expenditure has risen. . . . From violence done to the foreign ruler, violence to our own people, whom we may consider to be obstructing the country's progress, is an easy natural step." He expected that the people realised the speciousness of violence and found confidence in non-violence. "If the march of non-violence had not been interrupted by events culminating in Chauri-Chaura I make bold to say that we would have been today in full possession of Swaraj."³

Gandhi's sound reasoning proved ineffective. His harangues to the good sense of the believers in violence, lacked the tone of appeal of 1920-21. Rather he infuriated them by adding caustic remarks that they had retarded the country's progress. He condemned also the selfless youths who sacrificed their lives for the country's cause and thus excited counter-reprehension from the other side. The Congress resolution at Lahore deploring the attempt of the revolutionaries to blow up the Viceroy's train, was taken to be the first offensive against them. They found of course some consolation in the fact that although the resolution was drafted by Gandhi and "he fought tooth and nail for it, with the result, that it was passed by a trifling majority of 81 in a house of 1,713."⁴ Sarala Devi's allegations reinforced their conclusion: "I discovered in

the course of my conversations with a good many of the Mahatma's followers that it was only their sense of personal loyalty to him that was preventing them from voting against any resolution whatsoever that was fathered by Mahatmaji."⁵ They condemned Gandhi's resolution bitterly. "...The uncalled for and undignified attempt on the part of these individuals, to lower the national prestige by knocking at the gate of the Government House with the beggar's bowl in their hands and Dominion Status on their lips, inspite of the clear terms of the Calcutta ultimatum, would have been checkmated," they thought, had the Viceroy been badly injured or killed. They put up questions which Gandhi would find difficult to answer—"Will he (Gandhi) let the world know how many enemies of India he has been able to turn into friends? How many O'Dwyer, Dyers, Readings and Irwins has he been able to convert into friends of India?"⁶

The situation had been completely changed. Gandhi could no longer expect the cooperation of the revolutionaries as non-violent Satyagrahis. They gave an idea of their future course. "They (the revolutionaries) fully realise the part played by the Congress in awakening among the ignorant masses a keen desire for freedom. . . . They are hopefully looking forward to the day, when the mania of non-violence would have passed away from the Congress, and it would march arm in arm with the revolutionaries to their common goal of Complete Independence."⁷ In the twenties the revolutionaries were not sure about the position they held among their countrymen. A decade of activities among all sections of the people as Congress volunteers bolstered up the confidence to challenge Gandhi's leadership. They were prepared to answer Gandhi's "crusade against the revolutionaries," and at the same time, to expose the hollowness of the resolutions taken by the Congress under the

guidance of Gandhi. "The fact that the unfurling of the flag of Independence lay hanging in the balance till midnight of that date" (31 December, 1929), Sarala Devi remarked in a press interview, "and that the scales might have been turned at even the eleventh hour fifty-ninth minute had a message from the Viceroy or the Secretary of State come to the Congress granting Dominion Status, proves that Independence is not a heart hunger of the leaders but that the declaration of it is only a petulant child's retort. It would have been a worthy action of the Indian National Congress if Independence was achieved first and declared afterwards."⁹³

Such then, was the relation between the leader and the components of the Congress, when, on the refusal of the British government to yield to the Calcutta ultimatum, Gandhi had no way but to lead the nation in a second fight against the bureaucracy. Though Gandhi's nominee Sengupta was the leader of the official Congress in Bengal, he remained but a provincial leader and that also of a small loyal section, while Bose was emerging as the leader of all-India status with the main active youths of Bengal behind him. Bose's volunteer force in right meticulous military style and discipline, during the Congress session at Calcutta although ridiculed by Gandhi, evoked admiration from militant nationalists throughout India. Gandhi could not afford to loose the participation of Bengal youths by further stalling.

Salt Satyagraha

After long last the much awaited second phase of the national movement, the Salt Satyagraha launched by Gandhi in April, 1930, gave a new impetus to the revolutionaries of Bengal. To them, it may be said for certain, this move-

ment would have non-violence only as a window-dressing. Gandhi was certainly not unaware of it. In a press interview, when asked, "Assuming that there is Chauri-Chaura again, would you call off civil-disobedience", he answered, "I am trying to conceive a plan whereby no suspension need take place by any reason of any outside disturbance a plan whereby civil disobedience once started may go on without interruption until the goal is reached". Did it mean that experience had taught him that maintenance of non-violence during a period of excitement was next to impossibility? This was, at least, a tacit recognition of his failure to move the country towards complete non-violence. Apart from the facts that the revolutionaries successfully asserted their point of view in the political outlook of the country, and that they were turning aggressive, there remained another important point to be noted in the context of Gandhi's press statement. "It is likely that although one may take all the safeguards that it is humanly possible to do, an outbreak may occur", he said in the same interview. "The plan I am trying to think out is to prevent a discontinuance in case such an event happens."⁹ The repeated stress he laid on the continuity of the campaign was to consolidate his position as the leader which he was conscious, the Bardoli decision of 1922 had damaged. During these intervening eight years he could not retrieve it, and it was not possible to reassert his leadership without the launching of another movement with long ropes in the event of escalation. He was almost forced to declare the second campaign. This was a vital point of difference between the first and second campaigns—the first was launched under his own initiative, in fact, he even tried to impose it on the unprepared people and unwilling leaders, while the second was forced on him, although he did not mention the point when he made a comparison of the two movements.¹⁰⁰ The

preconditions of a movement, as he wanted, were not present, rather signs of violence were present everywhere. He hesitated from Madras to Calcutta and then to Lahore, from December 1927 to 1928, postponed the campaign upto 31 December, 1929, and could not make up his mind before April, 1930, when he apprehended that any further delay would goad the country fully into the arms of violence.

The revolutionaries of Bengal were restless. The two main groups, *Yugantar* and *Anusilan*, had formed their respective plans of action, independent of each other. The *Yugantar* declared open revolt against non-violence. Arun C. Guha and Harikumar Chakravarti began publishing a weekly, *Swadhinata*, which became a powerful vehicle of violence, determined to throw out all misconceptions about the power of non-violence. They had been misled in 1921-22 the weekly admitted, but in the future movements they would answer violence with violence.¹⁰¹ In the meantime, craze for action had gripped all the young, ordinary members or leaders. Years of inaction shook their faith in the leaders—whom they thought were afraid of losing life in the affray. This broke the party into many factions. Santosh Mitra, Satish Pakrashi, Yatin Das and Ganesh Ghosh formed the nucleus of a new party known as the Revolting Group. Another was formed by Hemchandra Ghose, which came to be known as the Bengal Volunteers and played important part during the Calcutta Congress of 1928. Satya Gupta of this party wanted to embark on a concerted action with the Revolting Group. Another was called the Chittagong Indian Republican Army, founded by Surya Sen. The last mentioned group planned concerted actions with different factions to create havoc for the British government in the 1930's.¹⁰² With the launching of the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930, each group got ready to try their own methods. Both of the two main groups, *Yugantar*

and *Anusilan* considered control of the BPCC necessary for reticulation of the subsidiary bodies for the success of a mass movement in their own ways. So, with renewed vigour, members of the two parties started the squabbles. Both parties registered volunteers for breaking the Salt Law, but pledge forms for the volunteers were issued separately from the two different Congress offices. Sengupta absolved the BPCC executive, engaged as it was in cliquing and manipulating of organisation of the Satyagraha and took the responsibility of the Congress in Bengal himself, issued separate pledge forms and enlisted volunteers. The North Calcutta District Congress Committee, a stronghold of the no-changers, informed the Congress Secretary early in April 1930, that they had enrolled 250 Satyagrahis and put them under Satish Chandra Dasgupta deputed to Mahisbathan to break the Salt Law.¹⁰³ Bidhan Roy on the other hand, who was officiating for the BPCC President, then in jail, wrote to Motilal Nehru informing him of the centres established in districts by the BPCC for Salt Satyagraha.¹⁰⁴ Both the groups were determined to prove their respective efficiency.

The government reacted sharply by arresting all frontline leaders of Bengal and the persons who were installed in their offices, were important leaders of the revolutionary parties such as, Bhupendra K. Dutta, Upendra Nath Banerjee and Surya K. Sen. The author of *Pather Dabi*, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, another new member, was known for his sympathies for the revolutionaries. To all of them this was a golden opportunity to guide the non-violent revolution into a violent one. The *Yugantar* worked on two courses simultaneously—some of them took active part in the Salt Satyagraha led by Purna Das, while others prepared for violent outbursts under Surya Sen, Rasik Lal Das and Bhupendra Kisore Rakshit Roy. The police believed that there was very little enthusiasm in Bengal about

breaking the Salt Law-it was resorted to as a camouflage. Just a few people were engaged in preparing salt, while others resorted to preaching revolutionary doctrines and training the villagers in military fashion.¹⁰⁵ The main areas for preparing salt were districts of Midnapore and 24-Parganas where use of contraband salt was a regular event. Relying on this information of a planned violent turn the police indiscriminately used *lathis* and fire-arms to disperse the law-breakers. At Mahishbathan a camp of Satyagrahis was established in the compound of the local Congress President Lakshmikanta Pramanik. The police raided his house, arrested him and his fellow-satyagrahis, destroyed the utensils and confiscated the salt. At Neela the police resorted to firing where the Satyagrahis were alleged to having resisted the police.¹⁰⁶ At the beginning of the movement, Satyagraha was confined to the *bhadralok* class, but the villagers sympathised with them.¹⁰⁷

The situation grew extremely grave for the police in the Midnapore district as the volunteers constantly threatened the village police, and used force also to some extent. Members of the Pingla Congress Committee were forcing the local police to resign their posts. Whenever a police party reached a village to seize contraband salt, "volunteers dressed in *Khoddar*, and with Gandhi caps on", noted the Bengal I. B., "rushed on the police and attacked them with *lathis*, clots of earth, axes, *daos* and crowbars. Showers of brick-bats were thrown at the police."¹⁰⁸ At Panshkura the volunteers were reported to have openly preached violence with threats to the police.¹⁰⁹ The Additional District Magistrate (A. D. M) of Midnapore reported about the murder of a sub-inspector Bholanath Ghosh on duty of arresting the civil resisters in the Nandanpur village. "All this talk of non-violence has been definitely given good-bye to", informed the A. D. M., "and the people have been

brought to such a pitch of excitement and are so much under the control of volunteers that the incident of the last night (i. e., murder of the sub-inspector) can be enacted everywhere they chose." He further wrote that an area of about ten miles around Chechna Hat was absolutely out of control, and that the volunteers there were in close touch with Calcutta. There were indications that Purna Das of *Yugantar* was guiding them.¹¹⁰

The A. D. M. reported that the volunteers were training "the *Bagdis* and other low classes in *lathi*-play and holding parades and teaching them discipline in a military fashion." Inspector General Lowman found that the Congress was able to "enlist the sympathy and support of such ignorant and uncultivated people as those in the Ghatal sub-division."¹¹¹ The report from Dinajpur district also was not encouraging to the government. "Large bodies of low-class people, including Santals are indulging in lawless demonstrations", so goes the fortnightly report for early October, "and no *chowkidari* tax can be collected."¹¹² In a note to the Governor the Law Member B. L. Mitra said that "Calcutta is calm on surface but there is an widespread, almost universal anti-government feeling. The net impression left on my mind is that the police reigns but the Congress is ruling in Calcutta." The Law Member made an interesting comment about the alliance of terrorism with Congress in Bengal. "A section of the zamindars, mostly the younger in age, has joined hands with the Congress, primarily because of the unsympathetic attitude of the government towards the class as a whole, and secondarily, the terrorism exercised by the Congress mainly through the lawyer class, with whom the zamindars have to be in close touch."¹¹³ In a note, based apparently on these observations, the government of Bengal reported that "from the earliest days of civil disobedience campaign the picketing

and boycott movements have been accompanied by violence and intimidation. There have been hundreds of cases in which purchasers of foreign cloth or customers of liquor shops have been attacked and beaten by volunteers for ignoring the requests of 'peaceful' pickets. . . In Calcutta Marwari foreign cloth merchants, who have failed to observe the restrictions of the cloth boycott, have been assaulted by *goondas* and had their faces blackened with tar."¹¹⁴ The demonstration that took place in Calcutta against the arrest of the leaders, cannot by any means be said to be of a non-violent character—reported an indigenous journalist. On 15 April, two days after Sengupta's arrest, tram cars were burnt in Calcutta streets. Brickbats were thrown at several places and the city was in a state of seige.¹¹⁵ During the movement Midnapore happened to be one of the most turbulent districts in the whole of India. The organisation of parallel courts in this district presaged extension of influence of Congress among the rural people, the government feared. The government also questioned the legality of these suits because their "functions went far beyond the legitimate scope of *panchayats* or arbitration courts."¹¹⁶ Assuming the government reports to be reliable, we can easily measure the impact of Gandhi on Bengal politics, so far at least as non-violence is concerned.

There was an apprehension in the government circles that the movement of 1930 would be on a wider basis than that of 1921-22. "The situation of 1921-22 amounted to nothing more than a mere non-cooperation", wrote Sapru. "To day it is developing into mass movement with the deliberate object of defying the law."¹¹⁷ The threatened swell of the movement on a national basis, for that was the covetousness of the revolutionaries who were put out of action since 1924 by detention, posed the biggest head-ache of the police. The year 1930 opened with minor acts like

the murder of a teacher in Mymensingh (February) and the looting of a shop in Tala, Calcutta (April).¹¹⁸ In April occurred the most daring and spectacular raids on Chittagong Police and Auxiliary Forces Armoury. It was a glaring evidence of pre-planned coup carried under strictest military discipline, timed to the seconds of the watch. Detailed descriptions of the raid are to be found in the reminiscences of revolutionaries and I. B. reports. One party raided the Police Armoury, another the Auxiliary Forces Armoury, a third destroyed the Telephone Exchange and Telegraph Office and the last group created havoc among the members of the European Club by indiscriminate firing. For four successive days the flag of free India flew over the town of Chittagong. The authors of the raid distributed printed leaflets in Chittagong and other districts of Bengal, as also in some other provinces, asking the revolutionaries, students and the youth throughout India to join the Indian Republican Army.¹¹⁹

The news came to higher authorities outside Chittagong through wireless from a ship at the Chittagong dock. Reinforcements arrived in no time. The raiders took shelter in the forest of the Jalalabad hills and offered fierce fight to the British Police in course of which many of them were killed. Two leaders of the Party, Ganesh Ghosh and Ananta Singh were arrested but escaped and another leader Surya Sen remained in abscondence. The entire plan had been made out with active cooperation of the *Yugantar* men in Calcutta and it should be pointed out that the Congress Office was used as the starting point of the four batches, as well as the jumping ground after the raids. "The general feeling seems to be one of elation at the success of this attack by a revolutionary force on the forces of the Government", noted a depressed Bengal Government.¹²⁰ The ~~Armoury~~

Raid was followed by series of overt acts of violence, of both major and minor character. In a note by a distinguished officer of the Bengal I. B. it was reported that the number of terrorist outrages jumped to 36 in 1930 compared to 4 in 1929, causing 19 deaths against 1 on the previous year.¹²¹ In December an Inspector of police was murdered at Chandpur (Chittagong district). Other centres of revolutionaries were not keeping idle. The *Yugantar* under its leader Bhupendra K. Dutta made an eight-fold programme, according to the I. B., viz, to attempt on the lives of Europeans in hotels, clubs, etc. ; to burn the aerodrome at Dum Dum ; to attack and destroy the Oriental Gas Works by using bombs and dynamites ; to destroy two main stations of the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation ; to burn the petrol depot at Budge Budge; to cut telegraph lines and to blow up bridges and railway lines.¹²² The plans were certainly very ambitious, but because of the alertness of the police these were never executed. Another attempt on the Police Commissioner Tegart in August, 1930, miscarried, killing one of the assailants. At Dacca Benoy Krishna Bose, a member of the *Sri Sangha*, killed the Inspector General of Police, Lowman and wounded Hudson, an S. P. In December, three members of this group including Benoy Bose attacked and shot dead the Inspector General of Prisons, Lt. Colonel Simpson, at his office-table at the Writers' Buildings. They also wounded a Deputy Secretary and the Legal Remembrancer by random firing in the rooms of other officials. The execution of Dinesh Gupta, one of the assailants (the other two had committed suicide) was taken exception to by the Calcutta Corporation, which published his photographs on the first page of the Municipal Gazette.¹²³ Outside Calcutta, Mymensingh appeared to the police as particularly notorious as a den of numerous conspiracies, bomb manufacture and feverish activities of

the revolutionary societies.¹²⁴ The Bengal police retaliated by raids and arrests.

The Bengal revolutionaries appeared on the brink of success in realising their second target, of transforming the Congress to a violent revolutionary organisation. During the Salt Satyagraha campaign it became utterly difficult for the police to differentiate between a non-violent satyagrahi and a violent revolutionary. In the saddle of congress had come many who had once indulged in violence and who now held important executive posts in the provincial as well as subordinate committees. This time they "answered violence with violence", and battered the government at their time of trouble. Surely, Gandhi had not expected this type of cooperation from the revolutionaries. True, the nation was on the move, and he had promised to lead the movement till the goal was reached.¹²⁵ He could not now swallow his own words, but neither could he allow the movement to be engulfed by the tide of violence. Before the movement covered even the period of a year, some chance offered to Gandhi the solution of the problem. Early in 1931, he reached an agreement with the Viceroy and in terms of it the movement was withdrawn. The police had a better time to deal with the revolutionaries.

Gandhi-Irwin Agreement

Before launching the Civil Disobedience campaign not that Gandhi had no forebodings about the upsurge of violence whose spirit still swayed over the whole country. "There is undoubtedly a party of violence in the country"; he wrote in January, 1930, "it is growing in strength. It is as patriotic as the best among us. What is more, it has much sacrifice to its credit". He tried hard to strike at their belief "... whilst I admire and adore their patriotism,

I have no faith in their method. India's salvation does not lie through violence". He knew quite well that "they will not be allured by our speeches, resolutions or even conferences. Action alone has any appeal for them. This appeal", he urged, "can only come from non-violent action which is no other than civil resistance. In my opinion it and it alone can save the country from impending lawlessness and secret crime."¹²⁶ How far were the parties believing in violence influenced by his reasons, was clear to him without any vestige of doubt, as the movement progressed. His appeal had fallen absolutely flat, he saw. "I know the non-violent revolutionary like me impedes the progress of the violent revolutionary. I wish the latter would realize that he impedes my progress more than I do his . . . Let him realize too that he has never given me a fair chance, . . . I want full suspension of his activity. If it will please him, I am free to admit that I dread him more than I dread Lord Irwin's wrath."¹²⁷ Instead of suspension, violent activities ramped, as seen above, throughout the campaign of 1930-31. He deplored the violent out-breaks at Karachi, Calcutta, Peshawar and Chittagong, and said that popular violence was as much as obstruction in the country's path as government violence, but till then he refused to stop the struggle because of them.¹²⁸

In March, 1931, Gandhi entered into parleys with Viceroy Irwin which culminated in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Anticipating the chance of disapproval of his compromising gesture by the revolutionaries, he said, "I want them to be patient and give the Congress, or if they will, me a chance. Let them preserve their precious lives for the service of the motherland to which all will be presently called."¹²⁹ One of the terms (probably the only condition by Gandhi) of his pact with the Viceroy was the release of all political prisoners. By 'political prisoners' the revolutionaries meant

themselves along with non-violent Satyagrahis. But neither the British government, nor the Viceroy thought alike. It is not known, however, what Gandhi thought. In a speech at the Congress session at Lahore, he said that some people would say, "when people who do not belong to the Congress organisation do particular acts which may be contrary to our creed, we are in no way and in no sense responsible. Those who think like that", he said, "have little sense of the great status that belongs to the Congress. It is our duty to consider ourselves responsible for anything that any single person born in Hindusthan may do . . ."¹³⁰ The revolutionaries probably based their hopes on such pronouncements and asked Gandhi to place before the Viceroy two conditions one, commutation of the sentence on Bhagat Singh,¹³¹ who was under a capital punishment, and two, release of the Garhwali soldiers who were convicted for disobeying the order of firing on non-violent demonstrators in Peshawar. Bhagat Singh was hanged shortly after the agreement was signed, and when the terms of the pact were declared it was seen that only the civil disobedience prisoners were released, not the revolutionaries nor the Garhwalis. The reactions of the revolutionaries could be easily guessed. They addressed a letter to Irwin stating that "a settlement with Mahatma Gandhi would not necessarily be binding on them and that if His Excellency desired a real settlement of the Indian question, the Government should come to a separate understanding with the Revolutionary Party."¹³² They came to realise that they had misplaced their trust and that the pact would lead them nowhere. They again concentrated on their own point of view. The revolutionaries claimed that they had made it known to both Gandhi and the Viceroy that Bhagat Singh's death would not go unavenged. It was exactly on the fifteenth day of his execution that Peddie, District Magis-

trate of Midnapore was murdered. Bose's journal *Liberty* gave a call for 'thousands of Bhagat Singhs'. Numerous speeches on the execution and a flood of revolutionary leaflets overwhelmed Bengal. Several murders were committed by the Bengal revolutionaries as retaliatory measures. In July, sessions Judge of 24-Parganas, Garlick, was shot dead ; he was responsible for the execution of Dinesh Gupta. In October Durno, District Magistrate, Dacca, was shot at ; the very next day attempt was made on Villiers, President of the European Association. In December, District Magistrate of Tipura was assassinated. The year 1932 started with an attempt in February on the Governor of Bengal, Sir Stanley Jackson ; in April, a second District Magistrate of Midnapore, Douglas, was killed as "a slight protest against the Hijli oppression",¹³² and in September 1933, a third District Magistrate of Midnapore, Burge, was assassinated. These were only examples of the most daring actions. There were several other instances of hitting, wounding, and killing both British and Indian officers of the Police. Chittagong had all through been a hotbed of revolutionary activities.

The Chittagong Armoury Raid had given a tremendous impetus to the revolutionary mentality in Bengal. Not only that the younger members of the revolutionary *samitis* found a meaningful justification of their revolt against their seniors, the seniors also were all praise for this spectacular achievement. Outside the revolutionary organisations the event created a consternation and hundreds of students and young men and girls enrolled themselves in these organisations. In the year 1930-31 the number of persons engaged in 'revolutionary conspiracies' reached the astounding figure of 1, 194 and the Intelligence Branch report showed that the movement was better established, more strongly organised and with wider ramifications than before.¹³⁴ All the dis-

district reports showed that the people in Bengal had least regard for the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and a growing trend towards avenging government repression pervaded. "A sad aspect of the whole situation is that the Congress represents a minority of the population of the district", wrote the District Magistrate of Bakharganj, "but for importance attributed to Congress else where it would have been absolutely without effect in this district." The Commissioner of Chittagong informed that in that Division Congress influence except in the towns was negligible. The Divisional Commissioner of Dacca referred to the young Congress volunteers as "always apt to develop into violent revolution." District Magistrates of Midnapore, Bakharganj, Mymensingh, all noted that there was little distinction between the Congress volunteer and the terrorist. Actually the terrorists formed the very core of the Congress. "The Bhola bomb gang were all nominally Civil Disobedience picketers. They were to be found later in association with Patuakhali Satyagraha" informed the D. M., Bakharganj.¹³⁵ What can be inferred from all these reports is that the Civil Disobedience Movement had provided the incentive to violent revolutionary activity and so the truce between Gandhi and the Viceroy produced little effect on the youth of Bengal. The forces of revolution had become so formidable that the District Magistrate of Bakharganj urged for an increase in the forces of the district, he even contemplated something in the nature of military force to deal with the revolutionaries.¹³⁶ The government tried to find out the probable reasons behind this spectacular rise in revolutionary ranks. In a note on political situation in Bengal Sir P. C. Mitra pointed out : "In Bengal we have not only the terrorist movement but materials for a very difficult and effective youth movement as compared with many provinces where the number of educated young men is lesser, where the past tradition and

activities are less acute . . . Further, the youth movement has an active leader who is not quite reconciled to Mr. Gandhi's politics. . ." ¹³⁷ Not only the leader, Bose, but in general the youth in Bengal is against Gandhi's unalloyed non-violence was the more vehemently so against his compromising policies. The repression committed by the government in Bengal was taken as a breach of contract, made in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, on the part of the government, and when Gandhi failed to save them from governmental wrath, they found no justification to follow him as a leader.

Gandhi had his golden chance in 1924, when he failed to direct the jumpy revolutionary youths towards non-violent revolution, all the revolutionary party leaders being then in prison, their organisations broken-up by police raids, and internal feud in their parties setting the junior group against the seniors. Actually the new recruits were then absolutely, without any leader, and the use of agents provocateurs by the government had developed suspicion among the revolutionaries themselves. It was high time for Gandhi to try to convince them in the defects, difficulties and ultimate uselessness of secret societies and thus remove the dislike harboured by the youth for his Bardoli retreat. On the otherhand he systematically changed his stand towards the violent revolutionaries. While in 1921 he cajoled them, in 1924 he bullied, reproached and even took the offensive against them. As a result in 1921 they had responded to his friendly calls and tried their best to maintain non-violence in their struggles ; after 1924 their response turned to the form of violent outbursts, as if to show a total disregard of Gandhi. In marked contrast to the Non-cooperation movement, throughout the non-violent Civil Disobedience movement of 1930-31, there was a parallel armed movement go-

ing on Bengal. The climax of the disregard of Gandhi was reached when the Pact of 1931 led the revolutionaries to believe that he was out to destroy them and so hereafter no question of cooproration or compromise could arise between them.¹³⁸ Before entering into parleys with Irwin, Gandhi had said to the revolutionaries : "Let them give to the Congress an opportunity of securing the release of all political prisoners and may be even rescuing from the gallows who are condemned to them as being guilty of murder."¹³⁹ He was given the opportunity and so he could call off the movement, but the government released only the civil disobedience prisoners numbring about 90,000. There were several hundreds others, particularly in Bengal, whom the government believed to be "actual and potential revolutionaries of the violent type." Gandhi's followers argued that Gandhi had pleaded for this type of political prisoners as well,¹⁴⁰ but as the proceedings remained secret nothing can be ascertained, and the agreement remained to be judged only by its results. To the revolutionaries it was a breach of faith to his countrymen on the part of Gandhi, for he should not have come to an understanding when the other party failed to accept his conditions. Gandhi did not make any apology for his failure to bring about the release of all political prisoners. On the contrary, he regretted his own action, that he agreed to pass a resolution in the Congress admiring Bhagat Singh and his two associates. "The Bhagat Singh worship has done and is doing incalculable harm to the country" he said when he helplessly watched the growth of revolutionary activities. In moving a resolution in the AICC condemning political murders he said, "when in past we have condemned the acts of violence, we have expressed admiration for courage and sacrifice of the young men. In my opinion the limit was reached when we passed the Bhagat Singh Resolution at Karachi. . . . I find the qualifications

of the resolution have been forgotten and the praises have been exploited.”¹⁴¹ And the unanimous resolution passed in the AICC, drafted by Gandhi himself, was “The AICC warns those who secretly or openly approve of or encourage such murders that they retard the progress of the country. The AICC calls upon Congress organisations to carry on special propaganda against all acts of public violence. . . Further the AICC appeals to the nationalist press to use all its influence in this behalf.”¹⁴² Gandhi forgot that his total and outright condemnation of the Gopinath Saha resolution could not hold in check the steady growth of revolutionary mentality in Bengal. His condemnation of his own resolution did not produce any better result. The annual report on newspapers and periodicals published in 1931, showed that in Bengal at least “many papers threw off all pretence of opposition to violence.”¹⁴³

The assassination campaign of the Bengal revolutionaries continued till 1934 when an attempt was made on the Governor of Bengal at Lebong. “Terrorism. . . is a phase, a necessary, an inevitable phase of the revolution. Terrorism is not complete Revolution and the Revolution is not complete without Terrorism”,¹⁴⁴ this had been the view of the revolutionaries about political murder. But, at about the middle of the thirties the futility of such actions began to perturb many of them ; many more had found in communist doctrines a systematization of their ideals, and above all police actions were there to curb their morale. In the late thirties they ceased to be a potential force. With the promulgation of the Act of 1935 the Congress decided to take office, but the decision was vehemently opposed by the *Anusilan* members. The members of its Chittagong branch made a final attempt to revive the party on the old lines under the leadership of a released detenu.¹⁴⁵ Gandhi decided to interview individual detenus in Bengal and persuade

them not to resort to or assist terrorism or other subversive activities in future.¹⁴⁶ He had moved a full circle and retrogressed to persuasion instead of reproach and reprehension. The revolutionaries, on their part, recognised though the folly of sporadic actions, did not altogether lose faith on the utility of physical force. "There is good reason to apprehend", wrote the Governor of Bengal, "that many of these leaders would, in fact, give a revolutionary lead and I have it on very reliable authority that some of them are congratulating themselves on having evaded the issue of a pledge of non-violence in their discussions with Gandhi."¹⁴⁷

The loss of energy of the violent revolutionaries offered, however, no consolation for Gandhi, for Bengal continued to be a perennial source of trouble for him. The revolutionaries, many of whom had turned Communists and helped to spread that ideal in India, began to question Gandhi's claim as a leader of the masses. Beginning from Deshabandhu Das, almost all sections of the Bengali society had put up hurdles against the entry of Gandhism. The revolutionaries of course were divided on principles, but their revolt was a moral one and in that they came out in flying colours. They captured and all along controlled the BPCC which was meant to be an agency of the superstructure created by Gandhi. Indeed, theirs was the greatest challenge that Gandhi had to face in Bengal they stood like walls around ancient cities, resisting the invasion of the alien force of Gandhian non-violence.

4. Belligerents at the mass front

A Prelude

In course of an appreciation of the character and personality of Gandhi, C. F. Andrews wrote to the poet Rabindranath that Gandhi had the moral power "to awaken the lives of poor people who form the bulk of population. They do not understand in the least non-cooperation ; but they understand that one little tiny man, frail in body and all alone is challenging the 'Burra Lard Sahib' himself and bringing him to his knees time after time."¹ This was the capital of Gandhi which made him a mass leader. The three movements he led in 1917-18 have been termed 'sub-political' by Judith Brown ;² nevertheless, they unmistakably presaged Gandhi's future rise to Congress leadership. But while leading the nationalist struggle his hesitation or cry of halt midway on every case of escalation intrigued many of his lieutenants about his real motives. It was quite possible that he considered the multidimensional upliftment of the masses a pre-requisite for other struggles, political and economic, or his consistent insistence on breaking the shameful barrier between the 'touchables' and 'untouchables' might have its basis on the hope that this alone would lead to India's salvage. But in some quarters a black cloud of doubt lurked whether or not on these pleas Gandhi deliberately kept the masses out of politics and diverted public attention on peripheral issues.

India in 1920 was passing through the pressure brought about by the World War. The war shot up the price of foodgrains by an average of 93 per cent. As regards other necessities, the price of indigenous products went up by 60

per cent and that of imported goods by 190 per cent. There was no commensurate rise in the wages of labourers in Indian mills to keep pace with the rising prices. In the jute industries of Bengal there was only a 40 per cent increase in average wages after 1914, whereas the cost of living had risen by 100 per cent. The war enriched the industrialists with fabulous profits.³ Unfortunately, not a fraction of this profit was shared by the labourers, partly because the workers were not organised to make a claim, and partly because the slump in international trade that followed the close of the war provided the plea to industrialists to negate any wage rise proposal. It was only natural that the workers grew restive in this open show of exploitation by their employers. "As the prices rose remarkably high", remarked the Secretary of State, "many an increase of wages which looks all right on paper proves to have in fact little influence in easing the hard lot of the labourers."⁴ The Royal Commission on Labour admitted that "a rise in wage levels was overdue, and the workers awoke to the disabilities from which they suffered in respect of long hours and other matters."⁵ Added to this was the impact of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia that created unprecedented stir among the middle class intelligentsia. The even-watchful British intelligence could not stop the infiltration of communist doctrines which made a direct appeal to the radicals in Indian politics. The Communist International was not slow to take advantage of the fertile field in India, already it was preparing theses on the means of changing the Indian scene and making the sub-continent fit for a proletarian revolution. It was also sending secret envoys to form a Communist Party of India. At the same time the Indian struggle for political freedom was entering a new phase under Gandhi's leadership. The Nagpur resolution authorised Congress action in organising labour and peasant-

try for the national struggle, two sub-committees were accordingly formed under the Congress for this purpose and Congress leaders were posted in the executive body of the recently formed All India Trade Union Congress. Gandhi himself laid the foundations of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association in 1920. The doctrines of communism from outside and Gandhi's movements from inside India had their impacts on Congress leaders, a manifestation of which was the issue of 700 free delegate tickets to poor peasant for attending the Congress session in 1919.⁶ The process was followed in the next session also. The AICC Secretary sent a note to Bejoy Krishna Bose, Secretary, Reception Committee, asking him to exempt peasant delegates attending the Calcutta Special Congress from paying delegate fees.⁷

Gandhi's keenness for bringing the masses under Congress leadership is too well known to repeat. "The Congress must cease to be a debating society of talented lawyers who do not leave their practice, but it must consist of producers and manufacturers, and those who would understand them, nurse them and voice their feelings"⁸ such was his opinion about the national organisation. Such views had consistently been expressed by him. "The Congress must progressively represent the masses. They are as yet untouched by politics. They have no political consciousness of the type our politicians desire."⁹ To arouse political consciousness among them his formula was—"We must first come in living touch with them by working for them and in their midst. We must share their sorrows, understand their difficulties and anticipate their wants."¹⁰ Accordingly Congress organisations were formed in villages, Congress volunteers appeared among village peasants and factory workers, but how far the principles were maintained, leaves room for doubt.

The pre-non-cooperation Satyagraha campaigns led by Gandhi, and his statements in the *Young India* must have had their repercussions on the Indian political mind. To Bengal it was heartening but not new. She had developed a consciousness in mass politics long before. We should not forget the contributions of Bengali middle class in the Indigo agitation of the previous century. Still earlier, the *Bengal Spectator*, the organ of the so-called 'Young Bengal', had declared that land should belong, not to zamindars, but to the *rayats*. *Somprokash*, a Bengali weekly, edited by Dwarakanath Vidyabhushan under the guidance of Vidyasagar himself, brought out stories of oppression by indigo and tea-planters, and supported the struggle of the toiling masses ; in May, 1860, 1260 railway workers, who were on strike, received support of the editor in their demand for 8-hour working day. Dwarakanath Ganguli, after intensive tour in the tea-gardens of Assam, published in the *Sanjivani* horrifying reports about the condition of the coolies there and moved public sympathy for them. Above all, there was Bankim Chandra, whose influence over the Bengali middle class can hardly be over-estimated. His article bearing the title *Samya* preached equality and equal distribution of wealth and happiness among all sections of the people.¹² To be precise, radicalism had always been a feature in Bengal's political philosophy. In the early twenties of the twentieth century two forces were active in awakening Bengali radicals to the consciousness of the power that lay in the masses-the first was Bolshevism and the second, Gandhi-led Congress. The juxtaposition of the cults of Gandhism and Communism revealed that both had their beginning on the Indian soil almost at the same date. The war-time (1915-16) efforts of the revolutionaries to free India having been foiled, some of them, who were in charge of securing foreign help, began to live in Europe to avoid

risks of being arrested by the British-Indian police. They were the first among Indians to come into direct touch with the Communist revolution in Russia. Virendranth Chattopadhyay and Narendranath Bhattacharyya, both of them noted revolutionaries, became converts to communism and found the salvation of India in nothing less than a proletarian revolution.¹² They managed to keep in touch with their party men in India and devised means of spreading the doctrines of communism there. Naren Bhattacharyya, more known by his assumed pseudonym Manabendra Nath Roy, became a close associate of Lenin and thus an international personage of his time. With Lenin's advice and help he was planning to capture the Indian National Congress and to change the "bourgeois nationalist movement in the direction of Communist revolution". Although Ray has been criticised by latter communists for being arrogant and also for "rejecting the Leninist policy of national self-determination, the wise policy of supporting the national liberation struggle of the oppressed people as a whole as an anti-imperialist movement and a part of the world revolutionary process,"¹³ the services of Roy in the formation of the Communist Party of India and in indoctrinating his countrymen in Communist ideology, can not be minimised. He founded the Communist Party of India (C. P. I) with the *Muhajir* youths in Taskent on 17 October, 1920. Original members of the party were Roy himself along with Evelina Trent Roy, Abani Mukherjee, Rosa Fitingov, Muhammad Ali (alias Ahmad Hossain), Muhammad Shafiq Siddiqui and Acharya M. P. Abhayankar.¹⁴ His other activities included smuggling of communist literature into India and sending emissaries there. Nalini Gupta and Abani Mukherjee were the first communist emissaries to reach India.¹⁵ Mukherjee was present at the Gaya Congress in December, 1922 and met Congress leaders there. Whatever the contention of Roy about the role of the

Indian National Congress, Lenin prevailed upon him and Roy's supplementary thesis, as edited by Lenin and read in the Third International, said, "Revolution in the colonies is not going to be a communist revolution in its first stage. But if from the outset the leadership is in the hands of a communist vanguard, the revolutionary masses will not be led astray, but may go ahead through the successive periods of development of revolutionary experience".¹⁶ The intentions of Abani Mukherjee in meeting the Congress leaders were not for to seek. Roy's first Manifesto¹⁷ to Indian revolutionaries formulated for them the line of action. "The emancipation of the working class lies in the social revolution and the foundation of a communist state. Therefore, the growing spirit of rebellion in the masses must be organised on the basis of class struggle in close cooperation with the world proletarian movements. But because British domination deprives Indians of the elementary rights indispensable for the organisation of such a struggle, the revolutionary movement must emphasise in its programme the political liberation of the country." About Gandhi Roy entertained the same sceptical attitude as his former colleagues. While Lenin took Gandhi to be a revolutionary, an inspirer and a leader of mass movement, Roy took him to be a religious and cultural revivalist and that "he was bound to be a reactionary socially, however revolutionary he might appear politically."¹⁸ However, having taken the task of Indian "emancipation" in the Marxist sense of the term, he sent manifestos to the Congress with the ostensible aim of changing its direction. At the end of the year 1920 the revolutionaries joined the Congress and Roy tried to penetrate into it through them. Manifestos written by Roy and printed in Moscow were distributed by his secret agents in the Ahmedabad Congress (1921).¹⁹ The early communist groups were in the process of formation at that time. Four

small groups of communists had been formed in four corners of the country, Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Lahore, but these groups were independent of each other. There was no coordination, not even any cognisance of each other. The Communist International established connections among them and took up the task of introducing one to the other. Muzaffar Ahmed of Calcutta was thus introduced to Dange of Bombay.²⁰ Roy patiently continued the work of indoctrination by sending communist literature. By the end of 1921 such books came to be available in Calcutta bookshops.²¹

As stated earlier, members of the revolutionary groups were the first to be influenced by Marxist ideology. Roy established connections first with the *Anusilan Samiti* to which he had belonged. After the formation of the C P I in Calcutta by Muzaffar Ahmed and Kazi Nazrul Islam, the poet, Bhupendra K. Dutta and Jivan Lal Chatterjee of the *Yugantar* Party established connections with the new party. Photostat copies of Roy's letters to Chatterjee were presented as evidences by the Government during the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy case. Nazrul played the intermediary between Ahmed and the *Yugantar* men as their common friend. The poet's zeal for militant nationalism was expressed through the poems he wrote in his bi-weekly journal *Dhumketu*. Revolutionaries like Bipin Bihari Ganguly and Bhupendra K. Dutta made frequent visits to the office of *Dhumketu*. On the other side, Nazrul and Ahmed were both members of the *Bangiya Muslim Samsad*. Ahmed was probably converted by Roy's agent Nalini Gupta,²² who had previously been in the revolutionary party. After Ahmed's arrest in May, 1923, Jiban Chatterjee was appointed as his successor by Roy.²³ Datta and Chatterjee helped Ahmed in absconding before his arrest.

- All these go to prove that the revolutionaries were

in close touch with the Communist emissaries as well as with the newborn Communist Party of Bengal. But, it is interesting to note that members of both *Yugantar* and *Anusilan Samitis* maintained connections with the communists "not so much because they were genuinely attracted by the ideas of communism", observed G. Chattapadhyay, "but because by such stand they hoped to obtain money and arms from Soviet Russia".²⁴ "We have pretty definite 'information' that Abani Mukherjee, while in India, was able to put the Bengal revolutionaries in touch with seamen engaged in smuggling revolvers from Germany"²⁵ this report of the I. B. perfectly tallied with the statements of revolutionaries themselves. "He (Abani Mukherjee) was given shelter by the leaders of the *Jugantar* Party, but they were not really interested in communism but wanted to secure Soviet financial and arms help through Abani for their own secret work . . . Abani . . . gave him (Santosh Mitra) a valuable contact for receiving smuggled fire-arms and explosives" said Harinarayan Chandra, leader of the famous Dakshineswar Bomb Case. Satish Pakrashi, one of the early communist-converts of the revolutionary party said in the same stance. "The *Anusilan* Party gave him (Abani) shelter . . . why? Not so much because the *Anusilan* leaders were attracted by communism but because Abani promised them help to organise armed struggle. Abani told them that he would supply arms to them through communist sailors . . . and they must arrange to receive it at Kidderpore."²⁶ At the initial stage, therefore, revolutionaries were not moved very much by the prospects of a proletarian revolution or a socialistic state. What was then the goal they were aiming at? They were more eager in finding out the means to drive the British away, than to think seriously about the constitution of the free Indian state. Some of the revolutionaries even thought of putting up the Gaekwad of Baroda as the President of

India,²⁷ while some of them could not think beyond their joining the national army of free India.²⁸ In 1921, the nation declared a revolt to end foreign domination and bring *Swaraj*, but none of the leaders, including Das and Gandhi, cared to explain what did the term '*Swaraj*' mean. In a letter to the Secretary, Bihar Panchayat Association, Das wrote on the question of the repudiation of the Permanent Settlement, "In my opinion, whatever steps are taken, must be taken after the attainment of *Swaraj*".²⁹ Das's opinion may be taken to be a pointer to the political thinking of the day, that they could not make up their mind about the future. However, a general feeling of hatred against western capitalism was there, at the same time a faith in the equity of the traditional Indian economic structure. Among some the belief had taken root that rapid industrialisation and the resultant commercial growth of free India would mark the dawn of a glorious and prosperous future in the traditional Indian way. The doctrines of communism were just vaguely in tune with the thoughts of the radicals, sanction of violence in it appealed to them so much that many of the revolutionaries leant over to communism for its advocacy of violence rather than for its doctrines.

The Formative Phase

Narendra Nath Bhattacharya alias Manabendranath Roy was a member of the undivided *Anusilan Samiti* and took a leading role in the so-called Indo-German conspiracy for the import of German arms during 1914-15. When the attempts failed in 1916 he fled to the U. S. A. to escape arrest. There he came in contact with the American radicals and "discovered a new meaning in the works of Karl Marx". Soon he had to leave the U. S. A. because the British police traced him there. He then settled in Mexico

and published from there his "first socialist essay", written in Spanish. Then he went to Berlin and from there to Moscow and came into direct touch with Lenin.³⁰ Under Lenin's guidance he set his heart to prepare his country, both theoretically and practically, for her liberation in the Marxist sense of the term. A ready response came from the nationalist press in Bengal. Articles based on communist ideals appeared in large numbers. "There is no welfare of the country until our labouring and cultivating classes stand with heads uplifted", wrote Hemanta Sarkar. "Of course their awakening will bring about a social revolution. . . . If your national agitation is to be efficacious, it will be in this way".³¹ Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta asked all freedom fighters, non-cooperators, cooperators, Extremists and revolutionaries alike to act for the masses. "The emancipation of the masses," he wrote, "will afford a path to the emancipation of the world".³² The annual report of the Bengal government on newspaper and journals published in Bengal in 1922 showed that papers like the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Bande Mataram*, *Navasangha* and *Sarathi* regularly published articles to inspire organisation of the masses by intellectuals.³³ The new gospel also found expression in the speeches and writings of revolutionaries. Yadugopal Mukherjee, the *Yugantar* leader, expressed the idea of opening up fronts among the labourers, peasants, soldiers and students.³⁴ Dr. Bhupendranath Datta attributed the failure of the old revolutionary movement to their failure in securing the support of the masses. "Alas! we could not realise that we were working only as agents of bourgeois interests", he regretted. "The failure of the efforts at revolution in 1915-16 taught some of us how, by dissociating themselves from the masses, the revolutionaries kept themselves suspended in the air".³⁵ The end of the non-cooperation movement of 1921-22 marked the end of sensational

activities to be followed by a period of lull. The energy of the activists eager for a new outlet found it now in organisation of labour and peasantry, for which the inspiration came through the press.³⁶ Roy had throughout been active in this respect. Besides stimulating ideological conversion, he was trying to give a cognisable shape to the very thin communist groupings in India. He had taken seventeen students from Tashkent to the communist University of the Toilers of the East for training in propaganda and organisational work in India.³⁷ Nalini Gupta and Abani Mukherjee made possible a foothold for communism in India, as also linked the small communist bodies there with the Comintern. Of these groups Dange's in Bombay became the most important because of his organisational abilities and the financial resources of his patron Lotvala ; besides, Bombay was an industrial centre. Dange attracted the attention of the Comintern by his book named *Gandhi vs Lenin*. Muzaffar Ahmed came into contact with Roy's men through his association with the revolutionaries. He was going on in a modest way, Within a year or two communists of different parts of India became known to one another and started regular correspondence. C. R. Das was a man of liberal views and his relation with the revolutionaries was an open secret. He was the President-elect of the Congress session at Ahmedabad in December, 1921. Probably this had promoted Roy to address a manifesto to that session. To the disappointment of Roy, however, Das was arrested before the session and Nalini Gupta found it difficult to get a man agreeing to move a resolution based on Roy's manifesto.³⁸ The responsibility was at last shouldered by Hasrat Mohani and we have noticed the fate of the resolution before. In spite of its being lost, the resolution was partly successful in the sense that through it a new idea vented. Das's sympathy for the poverty stricken masses had inspired

Roy to try to convert the Bengali leader in the Marxian way. In 1922-23 he addressed articles and letters directly to Das,³⁹ at the same time went on criticising the Gandhian way in which the Congress was moving. In the first printed manifesto of the CPI Roy wrote ; "The National Congress must not permit itself to be carried away by the sentiment and idealism of a handful of individuals however great and patriotic they may be The programme of the Congress has to be denuded of all sentimental trimmings ; it should be dragged down from the heights of abstract idealism". He was shocked to see that "the Congress does not hesitate to call upon the poverty-stricken workers and peasants to make all kinds of sacrifices."⁴⁰ He was blatant in his sanction of violence and criticism of Gandhi's non-violence. "Gandhism is the acutest and most desperate manifestation of the forces of reaction trying to hold their own against the objectively revolutionary tendencies contained in the liberal bourgeois nationalism" wrote Roy. "Victory will be won, not through 'suffering and soul force', but with blood and tears and will be maintained by blood and iron."⁴¹ Evelyn Roy, under the pseudonym Santi Devi lent support to her husband's views :- "The most glaring defect was (of Gandhism) the lack of an economic programme to win the interests and allegiance of the masses, and to make Swaraj intelligible to them. Next, closely related to this omission was the obstinate and futile desire to unite all the Indian people, landlords and peasants, capitalists and proletariat, moderates and extremists, in a common struggle for an undefined goal. At the slightest danger to their property and profits these Zamindars and millowners rally to the side of the Government, of law and order".⁴² Roy's critique added another anti Gandhi strain in the country wide frustration arising out of the Bardoli decision. The above quoted statement of Evelyn Roy would lead us to reconsider the

decision at Bardoli from the angle of class relationship during the non-cooperation movement. The episode of Das's strained relation with the Marwari capitalists in Bengal, which may well be considered to be a reflection of an all India picture, points to the correctness of Santi Devi's views, about the real reason for the decision, that was taken. We know Das, Motilal and other leaders were highly displeased at the decision, but we know not the reasons for their displeasure excepting that it frustrated the nationwide excitement. The real reason was the inevitability of clash of interest in the fighting party composed of such diverse elements as capitalists and proletariats, Zamindars and *rayats*, extremists and moderates. Considering Gandhi's later behaviour in mass agitations, it is not too much to think that events in Bengal were going beyond the rails laid by him, and he was not ready to face any of the three possible results the derailment was going to produce, the displeasure of the capitalists, disharmony in the Congress by a capitalist proletariat feud, and third, that was to follow as a corollary, the dissemination of the ideal of class-struggle.

Roy was sending his journal *Vanguard* and other Marxist literature to *Anusilan* Party members under intimation to Muzaffar Ahmed.⁴⁸ This might have accounted for the large number of *Anusilan* members going red. Although Bhupendra K. Datta and Jiban Chatterjee of *Yugantar* had close contacts with Ahmed and Nazrul and Upendranath Banerjee had correspondence with Roy himself, they were not converts to communism. The doctrines of Communism were more effective on the *Anusilan* members. Nevertheless, it appeared from their own statements that they had little understanding of class war or mass-awakening, necessary for a revolution of the communist pattern. "We wanted revolution", wrote one of the *Anusilan* members, "but till then we had no clear conception about it... We felt a

deep regard for the success of the Russian Revolution-but we, the Bengalis were not at all aware of the mass awakening that had made the Russian Revolution a success".⁴⁴ They had taken it for granted that because of the enmity between Russia and Great Britain, the former would come to the help of the colonial people in their struggle against British imperialism. They expected monetary and arms aid from Russia just as they had from Germany during the first great war. The Comintern, on the otherhand, insisted on publishing books and pamphlets for promoting mass consciousness. It would furnish printing machines instead of money. But as the general outlook among the Bengal revolutionaries was one of indifference to agitation and propaganda among the masses, the mass organisational programmes formulated by the few like Gopendra Chakravarti and Dharani Goswami remained unheeded to.

In Bombay the *Socialist* edited by Dange and in Calcutta *NavaYuga* of Ahmed and *Dhumketu* of Nazrul were slowly preparing the ground for communism. Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta's contribution in influencing young boys was no less significant.⁴⁵ Roy was appointed by the Comintern as the leader of the CPI, he was also given the charge of the working of the party in India. Comintern money reached India through him, but it is difficult to find out how the money was spent. Muzaffar Ahmed complained of misappropriation of the money by the revolutionaries for their own purpose ; ⁴⁶ because of their relation with Roy they were the recipients of the money even without being members of the CPI. According to the DIB Petrie, "Roy appointed Ahmed the distributing centre for his pamphlets and the *Vanguard* on a monthly salary of Rs. 100/-", which the person concerned has disowned.⁴⁷

Although it was Roy's belief that the Indian nationalist movement was being led by the propertied upper class,

the Comintern policy was not to part company with the Congress. This led him to attempt to influence the liberal-minded leaders of the Congress and at the same time to give a twist to the Congress policy. From Berlin he wrote to Dange. "A revolutionary mass party has to be organised as a part of the Congress, but this party must be under the control and direction of our own party (CPI)."⁴⁸ His first selection was, as we have already seen, C. R. Das, whose speeches resembled the doctrines of communism, and, who seemed to be amenable to Roy's principles. As the President of the Bengal Provincial Conference in April, 1917, Das said, "Our borrowed Anglicism repels our unsophisticated countrymen Do we invite them to our assemblies and our conferences? Do we cooperate with them in deed and truth? Is the peasant a member of any of our committees and conferences? Do we consult his voice in arriving at any of our decisions? Our political agitation is a lifeless and soulless force—a thing without reality and truth. . . . Hence our political agitation is unsubstantial—divorced from all intimate touch with the soul of our people."⁴⁹ It was not unreasonable for Roy, then, to hope that a man holding such radical views, even before the Great October Revolution had occurred, could be easily moved and influenced by Marxist doctrines. As noted by the historians of Communism in India, his speech at Dehra Dun on 1 November, 1922, very much resembled the ideas expressed in the *Vanguard*. "The Liberals fight shy of revolution. What is revolution but a part of that growth, the totality of which we call evolution Revolution means complete change and we want complete change. . . . I do not want the sort of Swaraj which will be for the middle class alone I want Swaraj for the masses, not for the classes. I don't care for the bourgeoisie. How few are they?"⁵⁰

To some extent, at least, Das was true to his dictum. He was one of the very few non-communist leaders who took a real interest in organising the working class movement under the aegis of the Congress. We have already noticed his participation in the AITUC from the inception of that body, and his involvement in labour movements during and after the non-cooperation movement. We have already referred to his indignation at the Congress reluctance to speed up labour and peasant organisations. His regretful hint at the unwillingness of the Congress to organise the masses touched the Bengali mind, and the nationalist press in Bengal took up his stand. *Atmasakti*, *Sankha*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Mohammadi*, *Nayak*, even the leader of the anti-Das group, the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, wrote articles criticising the Congress for not fulfilling the Nagpur resolution on labour organisation. In his Presidential address at the Lahore session of the AITUC in March, 1923, Das put a bold question, "Labour represents 98% of the population in India. Labour includes peasants in India. Does anybody mean to say that this vast population of the country require no organisation?"¹ By that time it was clear to him that the vested interests in the Congress would never accept his plea. From all the speeches delivered by Das it is singularly clear that like Gandhi, he was convinced that the masses constituted a great source of strength and that, organisation of that strength was an absolute necessity for the country's emancipation, but the dividing line between them was the technique. Gandhi's idealistic approach to the question of working in the labour field created misunderstanding. An incident that occurred in the Fyzabad district of the U. P. during the non-cooperation movement can be cited. In January 1921, the peasants in that district had turned violent and had plundered the local landlord's house. Later on Jawaharlal, coming to know of the in-

cident, urged the peasants to confess their guilt publicly. They did, and many of them, branded as habitual offenders by the Police, underwent long terms of imprisonment. Nehru himself later regretted "having exposed these foolish and simple folk to long terms of imprisonment."⁵² Congress leaders used to dictate to the peasantry that they "must not use sticks and knives, must not plunder estates, the peasants must win the stone-hard heart of their enemies by their kindness and love. The attempt to achieve their aims by refusing to pay the lawful rent of the landlord or refuse to fulfil their conscription duty to him may be looked upon as an immoral act." How could the Congress leaders think that this sort of non-violence would appeal to the peasants—asks a modern writer, who—from their very birth, were victims of ruthless violence of the landlords?⁵³ While pragmatism of Gandhi's stress on moral force from empty stomach thus was questionable, early communists were undecided and other political leaders, inspired neither by Gandhi's doctrines, nor those of class-struggle, used the masses to meet their own ends; mass movements in India, then, could not follow a smooth course. Roy had taken Das's speeches in their face-value and laid too much stress upon his potentiality as the man to lead the revolutionary party within the Congress. He failed to realise that whatever Das's personal views, he could not rise above the interest of his party, the constituents of which were the landed aristocracy along with the upper middle class bourgeoisie.⁵⁴ Das rejected Gandhi's views about the relation of the Congress and labour, he rejected also the Communist idea of class antagonism. He was definitely opposed to Communism. The Swaraj Party election manifesto displayed his inclinations—'True it is that the party stands for justice to the tenant, but poor indeed will be the quality of that justice if it involves any injustice to the landlord.' He could

not afford to lose the friendship of the landlord elite who still formed the nucleus of power in the Congress and whom he himself represented. The concluding part of his Gaya speech revealed his apprehensions about class-struggle. To the Secretary of the Bihar Panchayat Association he clearly started his point of view. "I do not desire any friction between landlords and tenants-I have opposed the idea of such class war from public platforms."⁵⁵ Roy later admitted that such compromise under verbal radicalism, was characteristic of bourgeois leadership.⁵⁶ The Manifesto, which he wanted to be read at the Gaya Congress, was sent to different addresses. Most of the copies, no doubt, were seized by the police, but it is at the same time unbelievable, as pointed out by Ahmed,⁵⁷ that not a single copy had reached its destination. Moreover, the Reuter telegraphed the message and the entire programme was published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of 22 December, 1922. Still, absolutely nothing was done in the Congress session--obviously due to the reluctance of the President and other Congress leaders to accept that programme. It is interesting to note that Reuter's telegram conveying Roy's message was believed in the nationalist press to be a malicious propaganda against the Congress by the government, to create dissension between zamindars and industrialists on the one hand and peasants and workers on the other.⁵⁸ Till June, 1923, Roy continued to try to influence Das;⁵⁹ having met with no success he set his mind in 'exposing' Congress leadership, even though the Comintern still continued in the policy of wooing nationalist leaders. The Fourth World Congress of the Communist International, held in November-December, 1922, invited Das's son Chiraranjan to be one of the five Indian delegates. The Krestintern (Peasants' International) even sent a condolence message to the Swaraj Party on the death of its leader.⁶⁰

Growth of Organised Mass Movements.

The years 1918-20 was a period of industrial unrest. As seen above, the war brought upon the workers immense economic hardship as there was no increase in wages to meet the high cost of living. The situation was utilised in 1921 by non-cooperating Congress volunteers who tried to give nationalist colour to every occasion of workers' unrest. Some of the Congress leaders took keen interest in trade union activities. In the absence of any workers' party, nationalist leaders guided the AITUC. "The AITUC was guided principally by the Congress leaders", writes Dange. "The masses at this period were led by Lokamanya Tilak and his group, in which Lala Lajpat Rai from Punjab, B.C. Pal from Bengal and others had a big place. Tilak was the moving spirit of the Bombay Working Class."⁶¹ In Bengal trade union activities were closely connected with the provincial Congress. Non-cooperators in Bengal showed an increasing activity in the organisation of labour. Nishith C. Sen of the Tramwaymen's union, Nirmal C. Chunder of the Press Employees' Association, Kabir-ud-din Ahmed of the Indian Seamen's Association were all Congressmen and took part in the deliberations of the provincial conferences. The last mentioned union was affiliated to the provincial Congress. The police reported that Das and Azad along with Surendra Nath Halder, President of the Jamshedpur Labour Association, B.N Bose, Secretary of the Bengal Nagpur Railway union and G.P. Chaube, Secretary of the Tramwaymen's Union, attended a meeting of the Indian Seamen's Union on 20 April, 1921. Muhammad Daud, Secretary of the Union was reported to be trying to bring the seamen under the influence of Azad, Das and other Khilafat and non-cooperation leaders.⁶² Das was elected as one of the Vice-Presidents of the Bengal Labour

Federation. During the Chandpur coolie affair M.A. Kashani, Secretary, and Muhammad Mohsin, Treasurer of the Bengal Central Labour Federation, were given as addressees to which funds for relief of the coolies should be sent and volunteers for relief work should apply. The I. B. referred to Kashani's subscription to Sylvia Pankhurst's *Workers' Dreadnaught*.⁶³ In short, Congress and labour unions got intricately mixed up in 1921. Swarajist volunteers carried on the tradition created by the non-cooperation movement by organising continued agitation by the labour and the peasantry. A strike in the Calcutta Tramways was reported in the first fortnightly report in January 1923.⁶⁴ Such strikes frequented in the fortnightly reports of Bengal government throughout 1923-4. Khilafat leaders also turned their attention to the labouring classes in the mill area in and around Calcutta.

The Swarajist volunteers who conducted the labour strikes had little faith in Gandhi's ethical principles. On the contrary they exhibited a growing inclination towards leftism. "The ideal of *Swaraj* that inspired the ordinary people of the country was not the spiritual *Swaraj* preached by the Mahatma", wrote a Swarajist leader, "but it was a *Swaraj* that was to satisfy their hunger. The common people thought that when *Swaraj* was established in the country, they would be freed from the clutches of the zamindars and the police, and to some extent, be relieved from paying taxes and rents. But the Congress authorities, after Bardoli, ordered people not to stop paying rent and taxes."⁶⁵ Among the communists, one group comprised of Dange of Bombay and Singaravelu Chettiar of Madras, found it necessary to remain in the Congress to give its programme a socialist twist, while Muzaffar Ahmed of Bengal disagreed to have any connection with the Congress. "From the sidelines he could only see its weaknesses," commented Chattopadhyay, "not its massive strength."⁶⁶

Ahmed preferred to keep aloof from the bourgeois nationalist politics of the Congress. "Your educated class is no good at all", he wrote in *Dhumketu*, "They can achieve nothing, they have no strength, whatsoever, they can only exploit the workers and peasants."⁶⁷ In reply to an attack by Ahmed on Roy's suggestion that Indian communists should work hand in hand with the Indian National Congress, Roy said, "The salvation of India will not be secured through a handful of orthodox communists."⁶⁸ Roy's view was reiterated by Dange. "We suggest to the radical minded men of the Congress a programme of a party suited to our present condition . . . The Party must take its part in the struggle of the people to win freedom."⁶⁹

However, the utmost necessity of organising the masses was recognised by all of them. Roy, the fountain-head of the movement, sent his directions about the organising procedure in this way. "In the first place we shall have to organise small parties secretly among labourers and peasants in different places. At the present, work ought to be done secretly. But along with it, an open party is also to be organised, but it will not openly preach the communist programme. This party will be styled the peoples 'Party of Workers' and Peasants' Party. Its programme will be the same which we published from the Gaya Congress."⁷⁰ In the Congress, Das repeatedly emphasised the need of organising the masses. All these efforts effected a labour conference, which held its session at Kankinara from 9 to 11 March, 1923, with Chamanlal as President and Das and Shyam Sundar Chakravarti as guests. The conference was believed to be the first of its kind in Bengal.⁷¹ In May a number of meetings were held by *rayats* and there was a proposal that cultivators who delivered part of the produce of their land, should, if they supply ploughs, cattle and seed, be *ipso facto* deemed to be tenants.⁷² Hemanta

Sarkar, who was the assistant editor of Das's journal *Banglar Katha*, was also a busy worker among the peasants. He arranged two successive sessions of the *Nikhil Banga Proja Sammelan* (All Bengal Peasants' Conference), the first at Bogra in November, 1925 and the second at Krishnagar in 1927.⁷³ On November 1, 1925 was founded the Labour Swaraj Party of India (also known as the *Sramik-Praja-Swaraj Sampradaya*) by the delegates of the *Praja Sammelan*. In the third Conference at Bhatpara in March-April, 1928, the party changed its name to the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bengal.⁷⁴ The organ of the party was a newly published Bengali weekly, *Langal*, edited by the celebrated poet Nazrul. Roy greeted the new-born party through his journal: "The *Masses of India* welcomes the Labour-Swaraj Party and congratulates its promoters for their revolutionary courage in the attempt to break away from the politics of vested interests."⁷⁵ The policy and programme of the party were stated to be "active universal mass resistance through country-wide general strikes and no-rent campaigns."⁷⁶ From 12 August, 1926, *Langal* changed its name to *Ganabani*, and its editorship was now handed over to Ahmed.⁷⁷ The weekly serially published the first Bengali translation of the *Communist Manifesto* done by Soumyen Tagore

At about the middle of 1923, the bureaucracy apprehended a fresh wave of unrest by the radicals, and arrested Shaukat Usmani, Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed and other noted communists. The case framed against them became known as the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy case. From about the middle of 1925 the convicts were coming out of jail and the following years were marked by their intensive activity. In 1926 Ahmed was planning to open a Labour Book Shop at Calcutta with the assistance of Joglekar and Nimbkar. Soumyen Tagore sent him money from Berlin for publishing

labour magazines, one for jute labourers and another for textile labourers, to be published from Calcutta and Bombay respectively. But the money evidently did not reach the destination as the sender complained of getting no reply or receipt.⁷⁸ Ahmed was asked to send emissaries to Burma, where his paper *Ganavani* was reported to be received and read with earnestness.⁷⁹ This year (1926) witnessed a vital change in Muzaffar's outlook. Whether persuaded by the comintern and Roy, or himself awoke to the potentials of the Congress, Muzaffar Ahmed established connections with local organisations of non-cooperators and Swarajists of his native place, Sandwip. It seems very likely that he was financed by them.⁸⁰ He wanted to hold an All-Bengal Communist Conference on the occasion of the Bengal Provincial Conference at Krishnagar on 15 May, 1926 and desired that communists from all parts of India should come and join that.⁸¹ Presumably, his idea was to preach the doctrines of class-struggle among the assembled Congress delegates, at the same time to denounce Congress leadership as vested interests and antagonistic to mass movements.

The strange alliance that Muzaffar made with the Congress in 1926, was not going to last long. He was elected as a member of the BPCC Executive Committee, but in a letter to Spratt he regretted that he was quite alone in the committee and had no voice.⁸² Members of the CPI denounced AITUC leadership also, as it maintained close touch with the Congress. Mukunda Lal Sarkar urged Ahmed not to go to the Kanpur session of the AITUC in December, 1927, as he felt, "It is no use for a small group only to attend unless a stiff fight is given". Singaravelu supported him with the opinion that "unless and until we can reveal the Congress and its present machinery is replaced by a new one nothing can be adjusted satisfactorily."⁸³

From Berlin Soumyen Tagore 'revealed' the Nehrus, father and son, to his party comrades : "They both shouted at the top of their voices and spoke on 'India for the meeting of Hindustan Association here. But at the time of action they join the opposite direction. These leaders are such a band of hypocrites." With such a feeling of indignation and apathy towards the Congress, the Communists of Bengal, who had by that time become members of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, wasted their energy in exposing Congress leadership. Later, in 1933, in the course of an interview with Romain Rolland, Soumyen Tagore justified their own policy of non-alignment with the Congress thus : "The idea of a national bloc is an illusion, and indeed a very dangerous one . . . The Indian bourgeoisie is not so fast asleep nor so stupid as not to see that a revolution here, while destroying the British domination, would also inevitably destroy their own domination. It would rather share the profits with the British imperialists than have no profits at all . . . Two different classes, two different attitudes towards British imperialism-that is the sole reality."⁵ As it appears from the articles in the Bengali nationalist press, communist doctrines had by then begun making an emotional appeal to the Bengali middle class, and converting the rank of the Bengal Congress, the bulk of which was supplied by the middle class, to the Communist view. It was a question of patience only. In the Legislative Council of Bengal the Swarajist members, however, could not but reveal their bourgeois character during the passing of the Tenancy Act by dilly-dallying over the proposal of a few concessions to the share-croppers. "Instead of playing the present game of camouflage in connection with the Tenancy Bill", advised Atul C. Gupta, Vice-President of the Workers' and Peasants' Party, "the members of the Council representing the middle class

community, should be well advised to concede something of their own accord to the peasantry to cement friendship between gentry and peasantry—a concession which they will be forced to grant at some future date.” *Ganavani* accused Nalini R. Sarkar, the mouthpiece of the Swaraj Party, of playing a double role.⁸⁶ But the Communists lacked the patience and perseverance that was necessary to transform the Congress to a potential forum of the masses. Instead of an attempt to capture the Congress by infiltrating in large numbers, the Communists antagonised the Congress by starting bitter criticisms. They failed to realise that by bringing contempt on the Congress, they were losing public sympathy, for after the non-cooperation movement the people felt a bond of sentimental attachment with the Congress. In a defeatist manner the Communists secluded themselves from the mainstream of nationalist politics and were thus “reduced to a sect”. “They suffered much hardship”, observed Chattopadhyay, “but lacked public support, for which they had none but themselves to blame.”⁸⁷ Roy tried his best through letters and articles in his journal, the *Masses of India*, to awaken his comrades into reality, but to no avail.

Socialist doctrines created deep impact on young Congress leaders like Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru. On his return to India towards the latter part of the year 1927, Jawaharlal joined the well-known Communists like Singaravelu, Joglekar, Spratt, Dange, Dr. Bhupendra Nath Dutta and Dr. Kanai Lal Ganguli and founded the Independence for India League. Ganguli was selected as the organiser of the Bengal branch of the League. I. B. reports show that Dutta and Ganguli convened several meetings in Calcutta to enrol members for the League, but their efforts were not very successful due to the opposition of Bose, who instead of identifying himself with the Communists formed

his own Independence League, independent of their control. Bose had as his backing the *Yugantar* revolutionaries of Bengal.⁸⁸ During the Congress session in December, 1927, Bengali delegates criticised Congress proceedings and wanted that the Congress should be a people's Congress in the strict sense of the word. They also discussed the responsibilities of the delegates as they represented the dumb millions of the country.⁸⁹ In the meantime, Congress volunteers, apprehensive of losing hold on the masses because of constant criticisms by Communist propagandists, took steps to counteract them. From Kanpur Satyabhakta complained that Congress interference caused delay in publishing his journal *Samyavadi*. "To my great surprise", wrote the U. P. Communist, "I heard it from the mouth of the *Sanchalak* (Proprietor of the press) that the *Samyavadi* could not be printed in his press. He told me plainly that the Cownpore Congress had directed him not to take the matter in hand. He refused therefore to print at their displeasure."⁹⁰ The Communists had by now acknowledged their own failure to change the bourgeois character of Congress leadership, so they started making attempts to wean the masses away from the Congress.

Meanwhile, events that occurred in the labour world, raised the Congress-Communist feud to a new level. The working class in India could not get over the perennial economic distress even after their formal organisation under the AITUC, or their rally under the Congress banner since the non-cooperation movement, and series of labour strikes led by Congress, Communist and Trade unionist leaders. The Royal Commission on Labour, appointed in 1928 which submitted its report in 1931, noticed great disparity of wages prevailing in the country. The wages the workers received were below the subsistence level and they were cursed to a life of insanitary habitation with want of medical assistance

and even a square meal a day. The report of the Commission pointed out that "the majority of industrial workers are in debt for the greater part of their lives. . . . In the greater majority of cases, the amount of debt exceeds three months' wages and is often far in excess of this amount. . . . The burden is aggravated out of all proportion by the rate of interest which is 75 per cent per annum . . . much higher rates are also charged, hundred and fifty per cent or more per annum being by no means uncommon."⁹¹ The employers would not lose a pie in their share of profit,⁹² so, it was in the lot of the workers to face drastic wage-cuts and unemployment in times of adversity in the industries. Labour leaders were of course, there to organise the workers for their rightful demands. The years 1927-28 therefore, experienced unprecedented labour strikes throughout the country.⁹³ In Bengal, the Bengal Nagpur Railway workers' strike at Kharagpur and East India Railwaymen's strike at Lilooah were described in the government circle as of a serious nature. The Kharagpur strike was organised and led by V. V. Giri and N. M. Joshi, deputed by the AITUC. The strike was a protracted one, covering the long period from 11 February to 8 December, 1927. The workers had to suffer immense hardship over such a prolonged period of struggle. Communist leaders like Singaravelu and Mukunda Lal Sarkar, who attended all the meetings of the strikers and extended their own influence to get supplies for the essential needs of the strikers, resented the way in which Giri and Joshi worked. They were reported to have distributed leaflets bearing the warning "Our real enemies who pretended to be our friends are plotting out a huge conspiracy with the authorities and management to defeat and destroy us in the midst of our present struggle." Sarkar alleged that leaders of Giri's party were unnecessarily making delay, thereby exhausting their strength and stamina

and that Joshi "who is staying here for the last few days, and it seems that he will not go till he sees that the men surrender unconditionally according to the Agent's orders."⁹⁴ "Giri has succeeded in hypnotising the men into apathy and passivity", commented Singaravelu, "They have become listless."⁹⁵ The eighth session of the AITUC at Kanpur in December 1927 precipitated a split. A leftist group wanted to change the official policy of the Trade Union Congress. The I. B. reported that in an informal gathering the leftists decided to lay out afresh a plan of a cohesive group and also a plan for future work in order "to foster real trade union activity amongst the workers."⁹⁶

However much it appeared to be hypocritical to the Communists, the Congress expressed its solidarity with the striking railway workers by unanimously adopting a resolution in the AICC meeting at Calcutta, moved by Tulsi C. Goswami, which ran thus: "The All India Congress Committee expresses deep sympathy with the Kharagpur strikers in their struggle against the grave injustice that had been done to a considerable section of the employees of B. N. Railway and ask the whole country to stand by them and help them to vindicate their rights."⁹⁷

Workers at the Lilooah workshop of the East India Railway had been agitating for some facilities like wage-rise and leave liberalisation. The management dismissed two of the union activists and this led to a strike by the workers. In the midst of growing excitement and a stay-in strike of the workers the authority declared a lock-out, and further aggravated the tension by a sudden firing by the police on a meeting of the striking workers. The attempts of K. C. Mitra, the organiser and leader of the strike, and of Sibnath Banerjee for coming to a settlement ended in failure. High-handedness on the part of the police drew massive public support for the strikers. There were numerous protest

meetings and demonstrations at Calcutta. The strike tended to become a fight against bureaucratic repression, with the strikers receiving support from the nationalist press. Subhas Bose himself negotiated with the authority but failed to reach any understanding. After about six months' heroic struggle the strike had to be withdrawn and that unconditionally out of exhaustion. Like the Chandpur strike in 1921 the Lilooah strike should have been taken up by the Congress as a national issue, first, because the government was directly involved in it, and secondly, because of the ruthless terror that the government had let loose on the helpless workers. Excepting the individual exertions of Bose, the Congress as a body remained indifferent, partly because of difference of opinion among Congress leaders about the Congress-labour relationship and partly because the provincial Congress leaders were engrossed in factional fights. That the Communists were organisers of the strike was another probable reason for Congress indifference.

Apart from the railway workers' strikes, Bengal was stirred in 1928 by continuous strikes in other undertakings also. In and around Howrah about 15,000 metal workers of Burns and Jessop were on strike in April, while about 25,000 scavengers and *methars* under the Howrah municipality ceased work. Besides, jute mill workers were restive throughout the decade of the twenties.⁹⁸ Since the days of the non-cooperation movement, jute mills of Bengal had been the operating fields of Congress leaders, but during the great jute strikes of 1928-29 the dominant position passed on to the Communist leaders. Ludlow Jute Mill Workers' Union was formed by Bankim Mukherjee who became its first secretary.⁹⁹ The leading role of Bankim Mukherjee, Radharaman Mitra, Phillip Spratt and Gopen Chakravarti in the Bauria and Chengail mills strikes corroborates government assumption that the Communists ousted Congress workers from the jute mill areas.¹⁰⁰

The Congress had a new experience during its session at Calcutta in December, 1928. It had to pay the penalty for the vacillating policy towards the working class. The failure of the Congress to champion the cause of the victims of repression in railways and jute strikes has already been noted. About the peasantry the Congress took the same hesitant attitude. The price of jute was steadily decreasing after 1925,¹⁰¹ hitting the jute croppers hard in those days of rising cost of living. Besides, there were as many as four interim agencies or middlemen between the *rayat* and the bailing firm, which meant that the *rayat* lost a big amount from the actual selling price of his crop. In the middle of the twenties there was a recession in Congress activity for elimination of middlemen, though it had been incorporated in the non-cooperation programme. The Communists were not slow to take advantage of these shortcomings of the Congress and exposed the Congress leadership as covert champions of capitalist and landlord interests. In December, 1928, they made an open show of mass revolt against the bourgeois Congress. Led by K. C. Mitra, Bankim Mukherjee, Sibnath Banerjee, Nimbkar and Joglekar, 20,000 workers of the Lilooah Workshop and peasants of Bihar *Kisan Sabha* attacked the Congress pandal before the Congress started its second day's meeting. They insisted on holding the session of the Bengal Labour Conference in the Congress pandal, but being persuaded by the Nehrus, father and son, they decided to hold the meeting in the open space outside the dais. The government interpreted the event as a mark of growing antagonism between the Congress and the labour.¹⁰² "The advance made by the proletariat as a result of the revolutionary activities of the last two years (1927-28) is enormous", commented Roy with satisfaction. "It has not only liberated itself from the reactionery influence of the nationalist leaders; it has even outgrown the control of the reformist labour politicians."¹⁰³

It is, however, interesting to note that mazed though by indecision, the Congress leaders were alive to the necessity of organising the masses for the national liberation movement and never tired of emphasising it. The day before the labour demonstration, Motilal Nehru said : "The time has arrived when the Congress should actively intervene and take steps to secure the just demands of Labour and take it upon itself to strengthen their organisation as part of the work of national consolidation".¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, such pious words were never translated into deeds by the Congress, and a ready field was laid for the burgeoning of the Communist ideals. The Congress President, of course, used unctuous words in his address to the labourers for that was the need of the hour—"The authorities who have stepped in on behalf of the employers . . . have resorted to shooting and violence in putting down strikers . . . who fight for living wage and for the bare decencies of human living."¹⁰⁵ The demonstrators, on their part, passed a resolution to the effect—"We, the workers and peasants of the land shall not rest content till complete independence is established and all exploitation from capitalism and imperialism cease. We do call upon the Indian National Congress to keep that goal before them and organise the national forces for that purpose."¹⁰⁶ What did the Congress actually do to free the labourer of all capitalist exploitation would be seen in the course of its future activities. Right at that moment Gandhi drafted a resolution that was passed, laying down a programme of work among city labourers and village reconstruction. In pursuance of that the BPCC passed a resolution deciding that "the labour movement shall have to be carried on irrespective of all question of Indian or foreign capital. There shall be no distinction of capitalists on the score of nationality."¹⁰⁷ Thus Bengal had always thought ahead of the

Congress-this resolution of the BPCC particularly marked the influence of communism.

Bose was rising as a labour leader in the Congress with a bias towards socialism. He was trying to involve the Congress in all labour disputes on the labourer's side. He in his personal capacity carried on the works in the name of the Congress. We have already noted his role as the negotiator in the labourers' side in the Lilloah strikes. The object of his Independence League was explained in the columns of *Liberty*. "Organised and disciplined Labour is being harnessed to the coach of nationalism. More and more is Labour being identified with the national movement . . . In any national campaign of non-violent non-cooperation labour will put its full weight on the peoples' side. 'Paralyse business' will be the winning slogan."¹⁰⁸ In a public meeting at the Beadon Square, he said- "To strengthen the cause of the strikers the Congress should come forward and stand by their side. If Swaraj was established in the country, it would be through labour."¹⁰⁹ Although he did never become a convert in the doctrines of class-war, like his *guru* Das, Bose was convinced that the Congress must take the leading part in organising the labour of the country. "The labour movement is closely connected with the Swaraj movement", he said before a workers' rally at Lilloah, "and what is needed at the present moment is a coordination between the two in order to force the hands of the unsympathetic Government."¹¹⁰

The Bengali Press was giving Bose its moral support. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* wrote editorials on the necessity of winning over the rural workers- "The unfortunate defect of our leaders has been that they have laid too much emphasis on the work of the towns and devoted too little attention to the people in the interior."¹¹¹ The editor suggested that the venues of our district and provincial conferences

should be changed from towns to villages, and that an itinerant body of good public speakers should address public meetings at important *hats* and *melas*.¹¹² Keeping to Bose's speeches, the BPCC helped the strikers at the Lilooh workshop by collecting money and food-stuffs for them, and Jnananjan Neogi organised lantern lectures for educating the working class people.¹¹³

Struggle intensified

Great changes were taking place in the labour world throughout the decade of the twenties. The participation of the working class in the national liberation movement in the early years of the decade made the government cautious, and the Indian Trade Union Act was introduced in 1926 to restrict the workers' involvement in politics. The provision prohibiting spending of union funds for political purposes could have no other meaning than to "keep the trade union movement confined within the narrow periphery of economism and not to allow it to assume political character."¹¹⁴ Whatever the intention of the government, the workers of India did not follow the line charted by the bureaucrats.¹¹⁵ In April 1929 was introduced the Trade Disputes Act which banned general strikes of workers in trade union as well as in political struggle of the country. From the date of its introduction as a bill in the Legislative Assembly in September, 1928, it was criticised as anti-labour by both the AITUC and the Workers' and Peasants' Party.

Much to the chagrin of the government, labour movements in India grew in dimension as well as in militancy. The economic reasons apart, the growing strength of the Communists in labour unions was an important factor. The split in the AITUC in its eighth session and subsequent formation of a left consolidation have been

referred to. A very remarkable aspect of this session, as contended by a modern writer, was the receipt of congratulatory messages from a number of foreign communist and labour organisations.¹¹⁶ The same author noted the presence of communists as an organised and compact group within the AITUC in its ninth session at Jharia in December, 1928.¹¹⁷ The rise of the left-oriented leadership in working class movements is manifested in various affairs like the observation of May Day,¹¹⁸ and systematic rise in trade union membership. The AITUC witnessed heated debates on the role of the workers in political struggles. While leaders like Joshi did not approve of political entanglement of the working class, Congress leaders wanted to make them a subordinate body of the Indian National Congress, again, leaders belonging to the Workers' and Peasants' Party laid stress on an independent and militant working class movement as the vanguard of political liberation. In the Second Manifesto of the CPI Roy outlined the programme of the party as—separation of India from the British Empire by means of organised revolution ; establishment of a National Assembly as the supreme authority ; abolition of landlordism, confiscation of estates, nationalisation of public utilities, minimum wages and eight hours' working day and Workers' Council to defend labour rights.

Thus, rapid changes had taken place in the conceptual world of mass politics. The seedlings planted by Roy in the early twenties began to blossom in the thirties. The Communists were steadily coming out of their ideological confusion. They had begun to realise that the Congress was deliberately misleading the masses, and as such looked upon the Congress volunteers operating in their field as unwanted elements. Lord Irwin once wrote to the Secretary of State—"In Bengal, the revolutionary movement is recruited from the *bhadralok*, the respectable middle class

or "Nationalist Bourgeoisie" of the communist jargon . . . it is strongly nationalist in sentiment, and it has not become "Bolshevised" to the extent of allowing authority to pass into the hands of the communists."¹¹⁹ The statement is partially applicable to the *Yugantar* revolutionaries who did not change their creed, but were active among the masses. As regards the *Anusilan* members, a large number of whom were converts, Irwin's assessment did not apply. A prominent *Yugantar* leader wrote about his differences with Roy on the nature and course of the Indian national struggle : "I told Roy that in a plural society like ours it would not do any good to add another element of difference, namely, class-antagonism ; that Indian struggle for freedom did not resemble that of Russia ; and that India was a colony and she required political liberation first."¹²⁰ To some extent he was reiterating the view presented by Gandhi on many occasions.

The year 1930 opened a chapter of renewed political tension in the Congress-bureaucracy relation. Labour world had throughout been restive, and with the beginning of vigorous political activities, labour situation tended to become worse. The tension prevailing in the jute mills of Bengal culminated in a general strike of the workers of all jute mills of Calcutta and on both the banks of the river Hooghly within a radius of about 20 miles from Calcutta.¹²¹ The strike was led by Communists but the nationalists came forward to sympathise with the striking labourers by raising funds and protesting against police atrocities. Subhas Bose was actively intervening in strikes for retention of congress leadership there. In a prolonged strike in the Tata Iron and Steel Works at Jamshedpur, Bose acted as the negotiator between the workers and the management, and the settlement that was arrived at, had been described by Bose as an honourable settlement extremely favourable to the workers. The Tata strike served for him, said Bose, as an initiation

into the workers' movement.¹²² The Bengal government in its fortnightly reports stated efforts were being made by Bose and his party to extend their influence over labour of all kinds, and that railways, docks, river transport, tramways and road transport, jute mills and other large industries were all receiving attention. Bose's efforts were interpreted by the government as preparing workmen to strike when the time would come—that "organisation of labour strikes on an extensive scale was adopted by Bose as a part of the Civil Disobedience Movement."¹²³

Bose might have contemplated a total war against the government during the impending civil disobedience movement, but he did not have to labour much for such a situation. "The effects of the world economic depression coincided quite fortuitously with the civil disobedience campaign"—writes a modern historian. "The depression's main manifestation in India was a catastrophic fall in prices in 1930-31 which continued for several years but at a slower rate... Farming tenants found their crops fetched too little cash to pay their rents, landlords and cultivating owners experienced difficulty in paying land revenue, and sources of vital rural credit dried up. Businessmen received lower prices for their goods home and abroad, and their stacks piled up for lack of purchasers. Some were forced to make their clerks and other employees redundant, while factories either shut down or laid off some of their labour force. Even government, the greatest single employer in the economy, its revenues from excise, customs, land and income tax drastically reduced, cut down its staff and reduced their salaries."¹²⁴ Past few years had created a tradition of labour unrest, and so it was sure to be accelerated in such a period of grave economic crisis.

The series of labour strikes made the government panicky. Raising the bogey of communist menace the

government introduced a Public Safety Bill in the Assembly in 1928, but it was defeated by the votes of the Swarajists and the Independent Party. The Governor-General certified an ordinance incorporating the terms of the proposed bill, under which 31 communist and non-communist labour leaders were arrested in March, 1929. By this measure the government hoped to be relieved of the communists, who, according to the government, "heretofore seem to have exercised by far the most considerable influence over labour."¹²⁵ From the Congress it had nothing to fear. The D. I. B. very correctly commented, "There has been little enough identity of interest between the average member of the Congress and the labouring classes. It remains to be seen how some of the Congress leaders reconcile their capitalist interests with the proposal that the labour movement should be directed into the path of class-war and that peasants should be organised and directed against zamindars and landlords for a clash."¹²⁶ The problem was with individual leaders like Bose whose activities were meant, as the Police Commissioner believed, "not to benefit labour and improve its conditions, but to use it as a battering ram to annoy Government."¹²⁷ Bose organised a strike by Burmah Oil Company workers at Budge Budge. A strike was going on in the Golmuri Tin Plate Works. The Budge Budge strike was a sequel to the Golmuri strike, as the D.I.B. thought, it was arranged to bring pressure on the owners of the Golmuri factory, who were also the owners of the Burmah Oil Company, to adopt a more reasonable attitude in regard to the strikers' demands. The interest taken by the Congress as a body in the Golmuri strike was striking as an exception to its normal attitude, pointed out the government.¹²⁸ The precautions taken by the government did not work out well, as the year 1930 opened with multiple strikes. In February, the government reported about continuous

strikes in the Champdany Jute Mills and in the Angus Engineering Works, resulting in the latter a complete lockout. In April carters' strike created a difficult situation at Calcutta.¹²⁹ In August an All Bengal Automobile Society of Drivers of taxis and buses and of conductors was formed of which Bose was the Treasurer, and Satya Gupta of the Bengal Volunteers, the Secretary. From about the beginning of 1928 an anti-union Board movement was going on at Bandabilla in Jessore district. In July, 1929 Bose brought the issue of Bandabilla under the BPCC and led a no-tax campaign there. This campaign engendered a spirit to fight the imposition of union Boards and the neighbouring villages of Bandabilla successfully resisted such impositions.¹³⁰ With the launching of the Civil Disobedience movement in April, 1930, the Bandabilla satyagraha became merged with the greater national struggle.

The owners of jute mills in Bengal worked out a retrenchment to get over the impact of the world economic crisis. An official record shows that about 83,000 jute workers were retrenched between 1929 and 1934. In February, 1931, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* estimated the number of jute labourers as 40,000, who were thrown out of employment. Besides, there were drastic cuts in the wages of those under employment.¹³¹ Consequently, labour unrest continued. In January, 1931, the workers of the Kamarhati Jute Mills came out on a short-lived strike. 5,000 workers participated in strike at the Hastings Jute Mills. Besides, there were strikes also in the Kelvin, Standard, Kinison and Howrah Jute Mills, involving 19,000 workers and resulting in a loss of 3,31,000 working days. In other parts of India, cotton mills at Sholapur remained a constant source of trouble for the authorities. In the interior of Bengal villages, peasants in the Arambagh sub-division, led by Prafulla Chandra Sen, started a satyagraha campaign against

settlement operations. The campaign was led by the Hooghly District Congress Committee, and ultimately the government had to suspend the settlement work.

Labour leaders belonging to all political groups wanted to shape this militant unrest in the labour world according to their own political faiths. While the communists were determined to oust congress leaders from the AITUC and other mass organisations, it was the success of the communists in capturing the jute labour unions in Bengal, as the government believed, that contributed to a great extent to an increase of Congress activities among labourers.¹³² That is, a sort of cold war with occasional outbursts was going on over mass leadership. The eleventh session of the AITUC in July, 1931, met under the presidency of Bose. The communists tried to wrest control of the executive, but a censure motion against Bose was lost by 26-24 votes. The proceedings of the session were disorderly, over which the President lost all control.¹³³ In October Bose addressed a labour meeting at Jagatdal, but the opposition of the Kankinara Labour Union created confusion.¹³⁴ These disorders were results of the split among the communists, as Bose believed.¹³⁵ Roy, the official representative of the Comintern in India, was expelled from that body. That created a rift among the Indian communists one group supporting Roy and the other the Comintern. The anti-Roy group set up a Red Trade Union. Admittedly the Red Trade Union had in its very short span of life the credit of propagating revolutionary ideas among the workers, nevertheless, it caused a further split, impairing the unity in the Indian trade union movement. In the middle of 1930 a Young Workers' League, formed of workers below the age of 25, was founded with the declared aim of establishing in India a Workers' and Peasants' Republic. However, all the organisations of the communists were united in their stand in challenging the

bonafide of Congress leaders with bourgeois interest, to act as the champions of the masses. They consolidated their hold on the labour and peasantry by arranging meetings, forming labour unions and urging peasants not to pay taxes. In the district of Tripura Krishak Samiti movement took an aggressive form under the guidance of Maulavi Mukleswar Rahman, Krishna Sundar Bhowmik, Maulvi Abdul Malek, Abdul Jalil and Kamini Kumar Datta, who were all members of the local Congress Committee. The Tripura Krishak-Sramik Samiti started a campaign of attacking the propertied class. On the May Day, 1931, a large procession of peasants and workers walked round the town of Comilla. The District Magistrate complained of non-payment of rents by tenants to have created difficulty for the smaller landlords. In Brahmanbaria the movement was particularly strong where almost all villagers, excepting the *mahajans*, were members of the Krishak Samiti. Although connected with the Congress, the communistic nature of the movement did not escape the notice of the government. The DM, Noakhali reported that there was no such movement in his district and that Congress leaders had asked him to take drastic action against organisers of peasants' meetings, coming from Tripura.¹³⁶ In the provincial Conference at Berhampore Bankim Mukherjee moved a resolution stating that the socio-political conditions in the country should be thoroughly changed and for this purpose the BPCC should identify itself with the vast peasantry of Bengal and start a country-wide no-rent and no-tax campaign. Though lost, the motion succeeded in creating an impression over the audience, commented the S P, Murshidabad.¹³⁷ The government complained that the *rayats* in eastern Bengal were invited to withhold rents to the zamindars and debts to the *mahajans*.¹³⁸ On the whole, consolidation of left-oriented leadership among the masses created deep concern in Congress circles and Gandhi was compelled to step in for lessening the tension.

Gandhi's Predicament

It was under Gandhi's leadership that the congress for the first time adopted a programme of mass organisation. It was again his hesitations in launching mass movements, his disapproval of involving the masses in political struggles, and above all, his closeness with the mill-owners and businessmen created in the leaders with a leftist bias a suspicion about his real intentions. "The dream I want to realize is not spoliation of the property of private owners," he explained his idea of class-relationship, "but to restrict its enjoyment so as to avoid all pauperism, consequent discontent, and the hideously ugly contrast that exists today between the lives and surroundings of the rich and poor".¹³⁹ To the moneyed class his request was that they should recognise "that the *rayat* possesses the same soul that they do and that their wealth gives them no superiority over the poor."¹⁴⁰ Before Rolland he expressed the same point of view in 1931. "It is true that I do not consider antagonism between capital and labour to be inevitable", he said, "though it might be difficult, I think it would be possible to establish a harmony between them."¹⁴¹ But over a decade of his leadership he could not bring about such a harmony, on the otherhand, he had to recognize bitterly : "At present there is no proportion between the wholly unnecessary pomp and extravagance of the moneyed class and the squalid surroundings and the grinding pauperism of the *rayats*."¹⁴² Not unreasonably therefore, the communists could find no justification for his utopian hope for a "change of heart" on the part of the landlords and millowners, excepting a veiled attempt to preserve what the latter was enjoying at the cost of the *rayat* and the factory worker. "If capitalism should come into the national struggle, I should not consider its interests if they were proved to be in opposition to those of the commu-

nity"—Gandhi said Rolland on 11 December, 1931. Only ten months back he could not but yield to the pressure created by business magnates. Just on the eve of the long-awaited civil disobedience movement, Delhi foreign cloth dealers wanted certain conditions to be considered by Gandhi before launching the movement. Bitter memories of picketing during the non-cooperation days had led them to urge for time to cancel those orders for which goods were not yet received, as also to sell those in stock.¹⁴³ More important than this was the fact that dealers in foreign cloth refused to obey the Congress mandate and sold foreign cloth even when the movement was in full swing.¹⁴⁴ Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas protested against repeated *hartals*.¹⁴⁵ In January 1931, the government reported an "increasing unwillingness on the part of the business community to contribute towards the movement," which the government mentioned as "a major factor in favour of a settlement."¹⁴⁶ Continuous strikes in Bengal jute mills, Bombay and U. P. cotton and textile mills and in the iron and steel plants of the Tatas were detrimental to the interests of indigenous industrialists and it was not unlikely that they would pressurize Gandhi for the withdrawal of the movement that was instrumental in causing so much tension. D. P. Khaitan speaking for the rising industrialists, declared in his presidential speech in the Indian Chamber of Commerce: "... it may not be amiss to suggest to Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress that the time has come when they should explore the possibilities of an honourable settlement... We all want peace".¹⁴⁷ "In the face of all this evidence," commented Sumit Sarkar, "it is surely not going beyond the bounds of historical inference to suggest that business pressures played a crucial role in bringing about a change in Gandhi's political stance in mid-February, 1931,"¹⁴⁸ In palpable disregard of the unwillingness of the nation,¹⁴⁹ Gandhi succumbed to the

demands of the capitalists, and signed a pact with the Viceroy agreeing to withdraw the nationalist upsurge. Needless to say, the pact was condemned by all radical elements in the community. Gandhi had to labour hard to counteract the charge of the labour leaders that the pact was anti-labour. "The truce has done no harm to the labourers", he said in a labour meeting at Parcel, Bombay, although the terms of the pact brought no redress to the labourers' grievances, "I claim that none of my activities has ever harmed the workers, can ever harm them".¹⁵⁰ He repeated the assurance at Dadar: "Rest assured that the truce has not in any way affected adversely the rights of workers."¹⁵¹ Immediately after the signing of the pact he gave an assurance to the U. P. Zamindars' Association: "We do not want that the tenants should stand against zamindars . . . we assure zamindars that their rights would be given due consideration in a Swaraj constitution".¹⁵² During his conversation with Emerson, Personal Secretary to the viceroy, he plainly said that it was wrong to advise tenants to withhold rents.¹⁵³ His condemnation of non-payment of rents by the peasants of Guntur and Mulsipeta was the practical demonstration of his assurance to the landlords. In a speech on 10 March, 1931, Rajendra Prasad told businessmen that the Congress was anxious to see that some way was found to save the foreign cloth dealers from ruin or heavy loss.¹⁵⁴ The government came to know that Gandhi himself was in consultation with business magnates of Calcutta, Bombay, Ahmedabad and Delhi to devise a scheme which would enable the existing stock of foreign cloths to be disposed of outside India. Since it would be contrary to the Congress creed to permit the foreign cloth dealers to sell their goods in India, Gandhi would like to make some arrangement with the government so that the businessmen did not suffer any loss.¹⁵⁵

Big capitalists were pillars of Gandhian leadership and Gandhi could not afford to see them ruined by the advent of class consciousness among the masses. He repeatedly announced his opposition to class war. In course of a speech to the Ahmedabad Labour Union, he said : "... The Swaraj of my dream is poor man's swaraj. The necessities of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by the princes and moneyed men. But that does not mean that you should have palaces like theirs." ... All Capitalists, according to some, are born ogres. But there need be no such inherent antipathy between the two", he stressed his conviction : "I feel that no class war poisons the relations between the mill-owners and the working men in Ahmedabad."¹⁵⁶ During his conversation with Romain Rolland in December, 1931, he reiterated his views : "I am totally against this (dictatorship of the proletariat), as it would mean Labour seizing Capital, and seizing capital is the wrong way of going about it".¹⁵⁷ Gandhi's sympathy for the landlords and capitalists and his antagonism to class war were believed to be betrayal of the labourers' cause by the communists, which became the main theme of their propaganda. The third All India Workers' and Peasants' Party Conference, held at Karachi on 31 March, 1931, passed resolutions condemning the Congress for its counter-revolutionary and pro-imperialist propaganda, and, Gandhi for his pact with Irwin, which was a deliberate betrayal of the Indian struggle for complete independence, as also for his probourgeois activity.¹⁵⁸ The party leaders engaged themselves in the formation of *krishak samitis* and labour unions, antagonistic to the Congress. Their ideology had so much impressed the general public that the annual report of the Government on newspapers and periodicals published in Bengal during 1931 showed that "interest in the masses was evident not only in their own journals in the communist

direction but increasingly in papers of general interest. Economic topics continued to rise in importance. "Even the Moslem Press as a whole evinced great interest in the condition of the masses, specially the *rayats*, and in some of them a communist colouring was not absent."¹⁵⁹ Added to this was the communist propaganda exploding the myths of Gandhi's mass movement. Ranadive, the Bombay communist leader vehemently attacked the Congress as an organisation of vested interests, and Gandhi, as he betrayed the workers. He created disorder in a mammoth meeting in the Bombay mill area, which was being addressed by Gandhi.¹⁶⁰ "It is underestimating his (Gandhi's) intelligence to think that he is ignorant of the ill will of the capitalists and the distressed conditions of the Indian masses", said Soumyen Tagore. "I do not think there are any persons in India—and if there are, their number is very limited—who are as well acquainted as Gandhi with the wretched state of these masses under the yoke of the Indian capitalists and landlords. But he is so fast rooted in capitalism that he cannot extricate himself. Not that he derives anything for himself," Tagore added, "it is a question of safeguarding the interests of his class, the bourgeoisie. . . Gandhi has made use of the Indian proletariat to serve the interest of the Indian capitalists."¹⁶¹

Gandhi had smelt danger in the air. Jawaharlal also warned him that "the time is overdue for the Congress to think clearly on social and economic issues."¹⁶² In the Bombay Congress of October, 1934, Gandhi made an elaborate plan of rural upliftment by Congressmen. The BPCC extended the programme through relief works. At Bankura the *Abhay Ashram* started 21 schools for the depressed classes; the Birbhum DCC adopted a programme of re-excavating one tank at each thana. Congress volunteers like Dasarathi Ta began addressing peasants to arouse them in self-consciousness. But Gandhi's programme could not

satisfy those holding socialist views, consequently they started a separate organisation in 1934, called the Congress Socialist Party.

There was no unity either in the Communist rank. After the 1929 session of the AITUC, rightist leaders like Joshi and Giri decided to form a new organisation to be called the Indian Trade Union Federation. Their session gave the communists a free hand in the formation of the AITUC programme. Within eighteen months the AITUC faced a second split and led to the formation of the Red Trade Union Congress. The second split was the result of conflict among the Communists themselves. Thus the trade unions formed by them were multiplying in numbers, not to show their strength, but disunity. The Workers' and Peasants' Party was holding its session at Budge Budge in December, 1933, when another party led by Bankim Mukherjee created disturbances there. Numerous rival organisations grew up in the Howrah jute mill area ; one headed by one Jiban Krishna Pal and named Howrah Jute and Textile Workers' Union, another connected with the Bengal Labour Party and named Howrah Jute Workers' Union ; a third called the Indian Jute Workers' Union with its office at Sibpur applied for registration. The East Indian Railways Workers' Union expelled their General Secretary Niharendu Datta Mazumdar and came under a new leader.¹⁶³ The CPI being declared unlawful by the government in 1934, the communists formed new associations under various names. Such an association named the *Sramik Seva Sangha* was formed in Kidderpur. It was led by Soumyen Tagore. The Bengal Youth League and the *Chatra Yuva Sangha* were two other such organisations. The police became aware of the existence of numerous such bodies in 1944-45 and banned them all. The Calcutta Port and Dock Workers' and Peasants' Party (Bengal branch), Kirti Dal (Bengal),

Workers' Party of India, Indian Proletarian Revolutionary Party, Bengal Jute Workers' Union and many other unions were formed and controlled by the communists.¹⁶⁴ Similar organisations were formed among peasants. Soumyen Tagore was known to have proposed the formation of seven peasants' associations in Rangpur, to be directed by the Bengal Krishak Samiti of Calcutta.¹⁶⁵ Government report showed that the Communists were active in bringing about a strike by the Calcutta Tramways workers. "Bus-owners are, with a view to their own profit, subsidising the communists who are trying to bring it about"—stated the report. This is very interesting, no doubt, but the noticeable feature is that the control of the union had passed from the Congress to the communists.

Gandhi's insistence on class peace and collaboration could not counteract the propaganda of communists which engendered hatred of the landholding class, as also increased considerably the number of *Krishak-Praja Samitis*. Gandhi alongwith his loyal followers—Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari felt very much embarrassed in this position, especially as Jawaharlal was increasingly speaking in a socialist stance. The Congress had to win the elections, which cost a good deal of money, and that was to come from the capitalists. So Jawaharlal had to capitulate. "Until a few days ago Jawaharlal Nehru was going strong and preaching his new philosophy of socialism everywhere in the midst of crowded audience",—wrote Sapru sarcastically. Babu Rajendra Prasad's speeches have been very direct and amount to a repudiation of Jawaharlal's socialistic doctrines. Rajagopalachari also has spoken in the same strain."¹⁶⁶ The Congress at Lucknow witnessed Jawaharlal's further climb down. Gandhi continued to advise the proletariat to remain friendly to their employers. When in 1935, the Ahmedabad Mill owners' Association proposed a 25 percent cut in the

wages of the workers, he asked the workers to accept that cheerfully. "I hope you will welcome the settlement which has been reached on the question of your wages and cheerfully accept the reduction"—he wrote in a letter to the workers. "I have not the least doubt that it will be in your interests to do so and thereby your prestige will be enhanced. . . . The millowners have invested their capital", he continued, "your capital is your labour. Either would be worthless without the other. . . . If you have imbibed this truth, you will recognise that the settlement safeguards the interests of both the parties."¹⁶⁷ It may be remembered in this connection that in 1927 Gandhi acted as a spokesman for the workers in the negotiation for settlement after a prolonged strike in the Tata Iron and Steel Works. After the agreement Gandhi was felicitated in a grand reception with Ratan Tata in the chair, who presented him with a steel casket and a purse. The renowned communist Shapurji Saklatvala criticised Gandhi's acceptance of the present from the employers who did not hesitate to induce ruthless police action on the striking workers, and whose obstinacy kept the workers unfed, unclothed, and without medicine. "I am not ashamed of the honour", Gandhi wrote in reply. "Mr. Tata appeared to me to be a humane and considerate employer. He readily granted, I think, all the prayers of the employers and I heard from the latter that the agreement was being honourably kept".⁶⁸ Nothing, of course, was heard from him when barely after a year the workers had to launch another strike against the policy of repression, retrenchment and wage-cuts adopted by the Tatas.

During 1937 the Congress remained busy in election campaigns while communists intensified their activities. The strike situation in the Calcutta industrial areas was disturbing the government. That the rank of the Communist Party swelled considerably, is evident from the government report :

‘It is reported that the organisers of the strikes have many unknown agents working for them throughout the industrial area and orders of restraints or restriction passed on selected leaders would therefore produce no effective result.’¹⁰ The strike in the Bengal Nagpur Railway which had begun in December, 1936, ended in February, on an assurance from the management that the time spent on the strike would be treated as leave without pay and that there would be no victimisation. Sibnath Banerjee and A. M. A. Zaman were reported to be visiting mill areas in Hooghly and their visits produced restlessness among labourers in Champdany, Wellington and Laxminarayan Jute Mills. In February, strikes affected Shalimar Iron Works, the Dunbar Cotton Mills and the Adamji Jute Mill. On 1 March, 1937, workers of five jute mills in the Budge Budge and Uluberia areas on opposite banks of the Hooghly stopped work. By the Middle of the month thirteen more jute mills were affected and a total of 54,500 men had come out. Towards the end of the month there was a strike in the Britania Biscuit Company and a one-day stay-in strike at the Oriental Gas Works. In October, 300 jute-press workers and 800 carters struck for higher wages. Numerous labour meeting and demonstrations staged by Bengal *Chatkal Mazdoor* Union, *Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation* Workers’ Union, Port Commissioner’s Workers’ Union and *Chata Karkhana Mozdoor* Union were important events in November. Towards the end of the month there were serious strikes at the Naihati, Northbrook, and the Dalhousie Jute Mills. Workers of two jute-presses in the Dacca district and 10,000 cobblers in Calcutta ceased work. In the Printing Press trade, though there was no actual stoppage of work, the year was marked, noted the government, by a steady undercurrent of unrest, chiefly on account of the long hours, the delays in payment, insufficiency of wages and the damage to health and life caused by

working with lead under thoroughly insanitary conditions.¹⁷⁰ The CESC Workers' union was under the Red Trade union Congress, and Subhas Bose, who set up a conciliation committee there, was reported to be working in the same union in cooperation with the communists.¹⁷¹ It appears that Bose acknowledged the consolidated hold of the communists over the workers of the CESC, and in the hope of capturing the union in time, he maintained connection even with the communists. Probably this event led the government to comment: "In 1937, the Congress and communists worked in comparative harmony, each being too useful to the other".¹⁷² The government came to know that Gangadhar Adhikari, one of the Mecerut convicts, drew up in 1934 a comprehensive thesis which was accepted by the provisional committee of the CPI. In the thesis Adhikari laid down a programme of transforming strikes in individual trades into a general strike, and simultaneously a peasant campaign against payment of rents. While communists, along with the Comintern, regarded the Congress as a danger to proletarian revolution, they could not but recognise the value of the anti-government feeling inculcated by the Congress, nor minimise its wide-spread influence in India. Essentially, they could not disregard the Congress altogether. In a note to the Comintern one of the Royists (probably Somnath Lahiri) informed that they had established connection with the radical elements in the Indian National Congress and were pushing them forward in the struggle for leadership in the Congress. "The imperialist terror in Bengal is much more brutal, ruthless, intense and widespread than in any other province", said the note. "There being no other alternatives than secret work in Bengal. . . It would be best to concentrate under the legal cover of the Congress on the secret work of the party . . . The election campaign will be used as a cover for placing our viewpoint before and

winning over the masses.”¹⁷³ The Bengal government reported that the names of Niharendu Datta Mazumdar, Sibnath Banerjee, A.M.A. Zaman and Soumyen Tagore were associated with every meeting and other activities of the labour, and the government suspected that they were organising a Congress-Communist joint campaign among the masses.¹⁷⁴ The campaigns created a tense situation, to cope with which the Chief Minister and the Minister of Labour, Bengal, decided to replace the traditional policy of neutrality followed by the government towards labour, by setting up a conciliatory machinery on the model provided by the Bombay Trades Disputes Conciliation Act, and by appointing labour officers and investigators.¹⁷⁵

Labour Under Popular Government

After the 1937 elections the Congress formed ministries in six provinces including Bombay and U.P. In Bengal a Proja Party-Muslim League coalition ministry, headed by Fazlul Huq was installed. The 1935 Government of India Act had provided for provincial autonomy in which ministers were the duly elected popular representatives.

After 1936 Indian economy got over the depression, and industries began looking up. Still, the policy of retrenchment and wage-cuts followed by millowners remained unchanged. Throughout 1937, jute workers of Bengal carried on incessant struggle against the oppression of the employers. Fazlul Huq ministry characterised this struggle as without any economic basis and as an attempt of the communists to create a revolutionary atmosphere. The government promulgated section 144 in mill areas prohibiting entry of the leaders and even resorted to firing by police to disperse workers' gatherings. For the Congress, no better chance would come to deploy their forces against a non-Congress communal government. The BPCC organised mass meetings that conde-

mned government repression, raised relief funds and Bose himself appealed for contributions to the public. Even the Congress working Committee adopted a resolution supporting the great jute strike, which thus became an affair of national importance. In 1937 Bengal topped the list of strikes in India with a total of 166, and a loss of 6,090,883 working days. The jute strike involved 225,000 workers, lasting from 26 February to 10 May.¹⁷⁶ In the following year a recurrence of jute strike was inevitable when the assurances given by the management were withdrawn. An added grievance in 1938 was the promulgation of an Ordinance by the government reducing the working hours in jute mills, with pro-rata lessening of income of the labourers. This year's jute strike involved as many as 90,000 workers, while 14,000 workers of Indian Iron and Steel Works at Kulti and Hirapur were also on strike. Both communist and non-communist labour leaders were active in these strikes.

Bengal situation thus provided the Congress a chance for allying the labour; but situations in those provinces where Congress had become the administrator, marred this chance to Congress. Bombay was second in industrial unrest after Bengal and the Congress ministry there had to counter it by no less repressive measures than the Huq ministry in Bengal. Besides, it introduced an Industrial Disputes Bill which provided "more stringent punitive measures for participation in so-called illegal strike than that was provided in the Trade Dispute Bill of 1929." The AITUC and the Indian Labour Party under Dr. B.R. Ambedkar voiced strong protests against the bill which, they said, was "reactionary, retrograde, prejudicial and harmful to the interests of the working class."¹⁷⁷ In U.P., the Congress ministry headed by Govind Ballabh Pant issued prohibitory orders on holding of rallies and demonstrations by textile workers who had been on a general strike since July, 1937.

In regard to rural affairs also, the Congress faced the same dilemma of irreducible dualism as occupants of the opposition and the Treasury Benches at the same time. In Bengal, Congress district committees aligned themselves with *Krishak Samitis* which had become communist strongholds.

The regular holding of meetings and conferences of peasants by communist propagandists produced their desired effect. The size of many such gatherings and the deep and sustained interest in their proceedings were veritable signs of mass awakening. They would give a ready hearing to the new ideas preached by the communists. Throughout 1937 numerous peasant conferences were held in different villages. A peasants' Conference at Ausgram in Barisal district was presided over by Muzaffar Ahmed. There was another in Arambagh district. Maulavi Shamsuddin Ahmed, Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta, and Niharendu Datta Mazumdar addressed huge gatherings at Kushtia, Khulna and Burdwan. The District Magistrate of Khulna reported that efforts were going on throughout his district to form *Krishak Samitis* on communist lines. The Commissioner of the Presidency Division reported that the whole of the Division was feeling the effects of *Krishak* movements. The resolutions passed in *Krishak* conferences mentioned above, included abolition of landlords' fees, postponement or remission of agricultural loans, reduction of freights on agricultural produce, and extreme demands like remission of arrears of rent, abolition of taxes on salt, kerosine and tobacco, abolition of zamindari system, etc. The Mursidabad District Conference was held at Beldanga, presided over by Bhupendra Nath Datta and attended by Soumyen Tagore. The Conference passed resolutions demanding remission of past 'three years' rent, free primary education without imposing any tax, and opening of hospitals for free treatment. May Day was observed in Calcutta with great enthu-

siasm. Labour leaders like Dr. Suresh Banerjee, Sibnath Banerjee, Bankim Mukherjee and Muzaffar Ahmed addressed a huge rally in the Maidan on that day. At Chittagong ex-detenus formed two rival organisations, both aimed at mass revolution, but one of them expressed willingness to carry on with the Congress following a non-violent policy. At Tripura and Noakhali the *Krishak Samiti* agitation took a violent form in looting of crops by *bargadars*. At Noakhali, a number of tenants invaded a field and cut the crop of which the Zamindar had taken *khas* possession. At Dacca *khas mahal* collections were not at all encouraging for the government, because no payments were made voluntarily.¹⁷⁸ Similar difficulty was reported from the village of Jawar in Kishoreganj, due to the reluctance of the tenants to pay their dues either to the zamindar or to the government. The non-payment of rents, according to the government was partly due to the propaganda of political agitators, and partly to the Agricultural Debtors' Act, passed by the Huq ministry, which was misinterpreted as a license for non-payment of rents.¹⁷⁹ In the second week of April, 1938, the tenants of Bahirmat village under the police station Amta in the Howrah district, removed the entire crop without paying the legitimate share to the zamindar ; in the last week the tenants of Sibgachia and Kushberia villages under the same police station, followed suit. The government alleged that Sibnath Banerjee in coordination with the Howrah DCC was leading the movement.¹⁸⁰ Tenants in the Munshiganj subdivision of the Dacca district were instigated to form combines and take possession of *Khas* and mortgaged lands from the landlords.¹⁸¹ Congress workers could carry on such activities so long as their party remained in the opposition. Despite communist thrust and Muslim opposition in peasant leadership, the Congress retained its hold in some of the districts like Tripura, Burdwan and Midnapore.

In eastern Bengal, the huge mass of peasantry being Muslims leaders of their Community readily added a communal colour to the peasant-landlord-*mahajan* relationship. They warned the peasantry against being misled into an alliance with the Congress. Practically they negated the efforts of Congress leaders in the police station areas of Mir Sarai and Sitakund in the district of Noakhali. In the Dacca and Bakarganj districts Huq enjoyed an overwhelming popularity among the Muslim peasantry. "In the district of Tripura, the local Krishak movement appears to have coalesced completely with the Congress", the government wrote the report in an interesting way, "even to the extent of dividing itself into two factions corresponding to those in the Congress camp. Almost every meeting was addressed by Congress leaders and many of the resolutions passed approximate to those which emanate from purely Congress gatherings."¹⁸² At Burdwan, Dasarathi Ta organised various meetings on behalf of the Congress to form *Krishak Samitis* and also led the agitation against acquisition of land for the Damodar canal. Dissension in the Congress led to the postponement of a political conference at Bolpur. Differences arose over the question of issuing invitation to certain communist leaders. The Conference was at last held in December, but its proceedings were not without trouble. Soumyen Tagore was one of the prominent speakers, while a pro-Gandhi Congress leader, Kali Mohan Ghosh incited villagers not to allow communist leaders in their villages.¹⁸³ The All India Krishak Conference held at Comilla on 14-15. May, 1938, faced attacks from three sides. The President, Swami Sahajanand complained of its being a middle-class organisation. The most formidable attack came from the Muslim League. The peasants in Tripura district were almost all Muslims and the opposition was based on the familiar communal appeal to entrust Muslim interests only to Muslim

organisation. The third attack came from the Congress *Krishak Samiti* of Ashrafuddin Chaudhuri, the then Secretary of the BPCC. The success of the Conference, if any, lay in the passing of resolutions in favour of the expropriation of landowners without compensation. At Contai and Tamluk subdivisions Congress workers carried on agitation against enhancement of Union Board rents. The main burden of communist propaganda was the oppression of the landlords over the 'naked and starving' peasants, that of the Congress was the throwing away of the British bondage. Naturally, agitations led by the two parties assumed different shapes. The Arambagh Local Board announced its intention of moving a resolution directing the hoisting of Congress flags on Local Board offices. Some of the Union Boards in Midnapur went a step further and began using rubber stamps with *charka* and Congress flags inscribed on them. A letter from the Bengal Governor showed that the communists were extending their field of activity: "It is interesting to note that in five districts communist circulars have reached the armed police, emphasising the poor pay and housing conditions, and the lack of married quarters"¹⁸⁴ The Minister in charge of the judicial department complained in October, 1940, that the communists were creating disputes between *jotedars* and *adhiars* in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur. *Adhiars* were reported to have looted crops on a wide scale.¹⁸⁵ At the end of the year 1939, the Police Commissioner of Calcutta reported an alarming increase in communist and socialist propaganda. Approximately 1,247 communist publications were intercepted at the post offices, and 1,154 were otherwise seized in 1939 as compared with 920 and 363 respectively in the previous year. In addition to the number seized, the Commissioner added, many books and leaflets has been distributed. The number of Communist sponsored meetings were no less than 154. The Students'

Federation, the Youth Wing of the CPI, organised study circles "to awaken the consciousness of the masses to their present position".¹⁸⁶ In a number of districts and subdivisions "peasants' hunger-marches" were organised.¹⁸⁷

In this fissiparous situation the Congress was steadily losing ground to the communists. Congress Socialists attributed this failure to the policy adopted by the High Command. The Andhra Provincial Congress Socialist Conference, held in November 1937, passed a resolution criticising the Congress methods.¹⁸⁸ In the Congress administered provinces the implementation of the 'Agrarian Programme', incorporated in the Congress Election Manifesto, led to a serious impediment of business. The programme had included elimination of rural debts along with improvement of the living conditions of the labour and peasantry, but it was not possible to be done because of the opposition of the landlords. The Congress Socialists insisted on the right of the *Kisan Sabhas* to agitate over their own demands, but the Congress High Command thought that the *Kisan Sabhas* were to obey as parts of the Congress. This difference of opinion led to the secession of Congress Socialists from the Congress after the world war was over.

Communist *Kisan* work awoke the rural masses to class consciousness and to the utility of collective resistance to their traditional oppressors, and at the same time fostered hatred against the foreign government. Awakening the masses to national consciousness and bringing them in the national movement had always been a programme of the Indian National Congress since 1920. Communist success in the mass front disquieted them. But the plurality of the Congress created confusion that indirectly helped the communists. Various injunctions from the High Command, even some of the resolutions of the Congress, barred the way of

easy progress of the peasant and labour leaders. The Tenancy Bill in the Bengal Legislative Assembly found the Congress leaders of the province in a predicament—they could neither vote for it, as that would be against the official Congress policy, nor could they vote against it, as that would injure their mass following. The caveat of the High Command led them into trouble also over the question of supporting striking labourers. An example is found in the CFSC strike affair. In the meeting of the Bengal Provincial Committee of the AITUC convened in the Calcutta Maidan on 5 September, 1937, Sarat Bose assured his listeners that Congress would always espouse the cause of the workers. In the following fortnight the Bengal government reported that “judging by the utterances of Sarat C. Bose, the proposed strike (in the CESC) will receive no support from the Congress party”,¹⁸⁹ which meant that he had to withdraw his own assurances following the directives of the Congress High Command. The difficulties of the Congress workers were still more intensified by the enactment in 1939 of the Industrial Disputes Bill which was regarded by the AITUC as a Black Bill.¹⁹⁰ Earlier, in April, 1938, the Gandhi Sevak Sangh announced its intention of forming a new labour organisation after the model of the Ahmedabad *Majoor Mahajan*. Vallabhbhai also declared the same intention on the part of the Congress, as the AITUC was, according to him, following the principle of class struggle.¹⁹¹ Gulzarilal Nanda, a leading figure in the Ahmedabad *Majoor Mahajan*, was appointed as the Parliamentary Secretary of Labour in the Congress ministry of Bombay, which was responsible for passing the ill-advised Trades Dispute Bill. While in Bengal Members of the Legislative Assembly urged for more seats for labour representatives and extension of labour franchise,¹⁹² Congress ministers elsewhere had blackened their party's image by anti-labour activities. On the whole,

day by day the Congress lost its hold on the masses, which was readily grasped by the communists. The outbreak of the world war in 1939 caused further deterioration in the position of the congress. The Communists arranged a huge anti-war protest strike by Bombay labourers which the Congress government did not approve, "On the otherhand it warned Congressmen", complained a Bombay Communist, "against any hasty action in the shape of civil disobedience, political strike and the like."¹⁹³ Gandhi's move was interpreted by the communists as his intention of holding up mass movements.¹⁹⁴ "Labour, in my opinion, must not become a pawn in the hands of the politician on the political chessboard", Gandhi said in 1927.¹⁹⁵ He seemed to stick to the same idea in 1938, and when Congressmen thought fifty times before organising a strike, communists completed the work. It seemed useless to argue for national unity, when the masses had begun to look upon the landlords and mill owners as their arch-enemies. Whoever came to organise them against these acknowledged enemies, were readily received by the masses. To the starving wage-earners the addition of a mere farthing to his daily wages meant much, so they unhesitatingly stood behind the man whose manoeuvres had earned him the extra farthing.

These were recognised facts at the end of the 1930's, and the Congress should have changed its policy towards the masses. But its leader failed to see the impossibility of hunting with the capitalist hound and running with the mass hare. The preachers of class struggle steadily built up their base on this failure, and the actions taken by Congress governments in regard to labour, only helped to expose their class character. Gandhi's alliance with the capitalists was disliked not only by communists and leftist Congress leaders, but also by nationalists like Jayakar. "The worst of the present-day politics is that Gujarati and Marwari

merchant princes are exploiting Gandhi in the worst possible way," complained the Maharashtrian, "by paying lip service to his doctrines and using his agitation for personal ends."¹⁰⁶ Certainly Gandhi was not unaware, but he was helpless. He could not disalign the capitalists whose funds he required for Congress electioneering, as also for his nation-building programme which was his resort when the Congress would reject him. So he had to stake the mass partnership of the Congress.

The peculiarities of the Bengal situation developed new elements in her anti-Gandhi trend. (i) In the industrial belt round the metropolis, the mass of the non-Bengali Muslim labour, in the jute mills and other industries found the Congress no less an oppressor than the Muslim peasantry did in eastern Bengal as victims of oppression by landlords and *mahajans*—both of whom were allies of the Congress and also Hindus. On this judgement, Hindu-Muslim relations in the province reached a point of no-return. (ii) There was a deep-rooted conviction in Bengal about the imperativeness of a radical change in the socio-economic pattern for a successful political revolution. To this radical outlook of the Bengalis the Congress Working Committee, on which they were gradually losing their hold, appeared no less than a reactionary body, displaying an anti-revolutionary attitude. As early as in 1928, one of the leading nationalist dailies of Bengal gave a whole-hearted support to Jawaharlal's address to the Punjab Provincial Conference: "We must cultivate a revolutionary outlook. What shall it profit the masses if every one of the offices held by Englishmen is held by the Indian? Fundamentally the condition of the masses cannot improve until the social fabric is changed, and the only effective change can be by the formation of a democratic socialist state."¹⁰⁷ The nationalist press in Bengal was critical of the Congress as it failed to realise

this ideal. The criticism intensified when in 1937 the Congress decided to retrogress in the path of constitutionalism, and, at the end of the year 1939, in the removal of Subhas Bose from Congress Presidentship by the Gandhi-Patel group, they found nothing but the 'purging' of all radical and left elements from the Congress High Command. "We have always urged the view that there are elements in the Congress that will refuse to identify themselves with any struggle for *Purna Swaraj*", wrote the *Hindustan Standard* in a lengthy editorial, "For all the advantages for which they have sought during all these years of their association with the Congress may flow from an agreement between themselves and the British Government on the basis of British trusteeship. They have persuaded themselves that the attainment by India of complete Independence would lead to the transference of political and financial powers from their hands into the hands of the peasants, the workers and the 'petty bourgeoisie'. That is a possibility which they cannot contemplate with equanimity", continued the paper bitterly, "and it would be their consistent effort to influence the policy of the High Command in such a manner that the position of vantage these men have acquired or may acquire by a compromise with the British government may be kept intact without any radical change in the existing social structure."¹⁹⁸ In a nonchalant way, Gandhi went on expressing his disbelief in class war. "I hold that the coming into power of the proletariat through violence is bound to fail", he wrote in the *Harijan* of 27 January, 1940, "what is gained by violence must be lost before superior violence." As against this propaganda, M. N. Roy laboriously campaigned for the dismounting of Gandhian leadership for he saw in him the danger of a compromise with the British and a consequent freezing of the revolutionary mood of the masses.¹⁹⁹ While the Hindus of Bengal, whose national

aspiration had always been centred round the Congress, could harbour such hatred towards the degenerating Congress, it is hardly any wonder that the Muslims, who remained alienated from the Congress from its very inception, would not join the row. So, as the Communists were leading the masses apart from Congress leadership, Bengali Muslims broke away from their short-lived alliance with the Congress and countered Gandhi's bid for religious unity in India.

5. The Challenge of Religion.

The Bengal Situation

Gandhi's rise to national leadership opened up a new horizon of Hindu-Muslim relation in India's struggle for freedom. Except a handful of leaders with a very liberal outlook¹, the Muslims generally looked upon the growth of Hindu nationalism with fear and suspicion, and deliberately kept themselves aloof from the Indian National Congress which they belived to be a Hindu revivalist organisation. Too much religiosity and stress on Hindu rituals in the secret societies that sprang up with the spread of nationalism, and the observation of celebrations reminiscent of the glories of the past Hindu history by leaders like Tilak, watered the plant of Muslim suspicion. The imperialists played on these forces of separation and used the weapon of divide and rule to strengthen their own authority. They meted out a preferential treatment to the Muslims in regard to public appointments and other benefits. Naturally the Muslims turned loyal subjects with deep regard for the British sense of justice.

Towards the end of the second decade of the present century, development in international affairs created some misgivings among Indian Muslims about the intentions of the British. The first great war was coming to a close, in which Turkey was in the defeated bloc. The victorious Allied Powers including Great Britain proposed a partition of the Turkish empire. Turkish Sultan was regarded as the *Khalifa* or the temporal and spiritual head of the Muslim world and the curtailment of his power was resented by all Muslims. In India the resentment took a violent form under the lead of the Ali Brothers—Maulanas Shaukat Ali

and Mohammed Ali. Gandhi at that time was trying all means to get into Congress leadership. He extended his vocal support to the grievances of the Muslims on the Khilafat issue, and also urged the British government to take to redress the grievance that was just. The Indian Muslims readily joined Gandhi, agreed to practise non-violent Satyagraha against British injustice, and it was with their support that Gandhi was able to capture Congress leadership at the end of the year 1920.

The Indian Muslims were used to parade their Turkish ancestry. For quite a long time after the British occupation of India they were disinclined to take Western education. The *Imam* in every mosque read the *Khutba* in the name of the *Khalifa*. So the disintegration of the *Khalifa's* empire was taken as an insult to the entire Muslim community. Gandhi's proposal of making the redress of Khilafat wrong a national issue in India, was very welcome to them, for being the minority in India, they knew, their agitation might not be given much importance by the authorities. By the inclusion of the Khilafat issue in the non-cooperation programme, Gandhi united the Hindus and Muslims in their struggle against bureaucracy. But the situations in Bengal were far different from the all-India picture. Not only that Muslims were the majority community in Bengal but also had little in common with their upper India brethren. The bulk of the Muslim community in the province were low-caste Hindu converts, who felt no glory in the Turkish part. The language they spoke was not Urdu, but Bengali. They were too pre-occupied with the problems of their own food and clothing to care for the injustice done to the *Khalifa*, which bore no meaning to them. Their leaders, members of the *Ashraf* families,² though they spoke Urdu and lived a life that resembled that of the Upper India Muslim aristocrats, was not very much moved by the injustice done

to the *Khalifa*, and so urged their followers to remain loyal to the British crown. So, Gandhi's movement did not find a ready response from the Muslims of Bengal, who like their Hindu neighbours, were critical and sceptical about the new leader.

Due to the easy railway and river connections of Calcutta with northern India, a large number of up-country Muslims had migrated to the city as workers in the jute and other industries situated in and around it, while want of easy communication between Calcutta and rural Bengal did not draw except very few from Bengali rural population, mostly Muslims.³ Thus there was a sharp and crucial division in Bengal's Muslim population. The Urdu-speaking up-country men who were in the city, became the mainstay of Khilafat agitations at the beginning, while the Bengali-speaking rural mass remained unconcerned and to some extent hostile to the Khilafat cause. So when the Indian Muslims decided to boycott the peace celebrations in December, 1919, on the ground that the terms of the peace had betrayed the cause of the *Khalifa*, the boycott was a success in Calcutta while in the rural parts of Bengal the celebrations passed off smoothly as planned by the authorities.⁴ In the interior of Bengal there were no signs of a *hartal* observed on the khilafat issue on 1 August, 1920,—such was the newspaper report, corroborated by the government.⁵ Dr. Abdullah Suhrawardy, a very influential Muslim aristocrat of Calcutta was reported to have said that in his opinion the Khilafat agitation was meaningless.⁶ In September, 1920, the non-cooperation resolution had a mixed reception among Bengal's Muslim population. While Urdu-speaking Muslims under Azad's lead greeted it, Bengali-speaking Fazlul Huq denounced the boycott of schools described the movement as immoral, unjust and selfish, and opined that it would reduce the Muslims of

India to the position of political helots.⁷ The all India Muslim League, holding its session the day after the Congress had concluded its special session at Calcutta, resolved to follow the non-cooperation programme inspite of the opposition of the President Jinnah himself, and of Fazlul Huq. Huq was almost forced to accept non-cooperation, but he defected as soon as possible. He was believed to have been persuaded to leave the non-cooperation party by his personal friend Khan Sahib Muhammad Yusuf of the C. I. D., and having armed himself with *fatwas* from the *Maulavis* helped the District Magistrate of Bakharganj in conducting an anti-non-cooperation campaign.⁸ He along with Abul Kasim, a Muslim lawyer of Burdwan, even refused to withdraw their candidature for the 1920 elections, but later withdrew out of fear of physical attacks by Khilafatists.⁹ The stand taken by Huq is utterly confusing. He was not against the Khilafat movement, he was not against the nationalist movement, either. Along with Akram Khan and Mujibar Rahman, he issued an appeal to all Hindus and Muslims to observe 17 October, 1919, as 'Khilafat Day', also addressed a huge gathering that day.¹⁰ On 4 December, he issued a joint manifesto with Das asking the people to boycott the peace celebrations.¹¹ He presided over the Khilafat Conference at Delhi in November, 1919, that passed resolutions refusing to cooperate with the government "unless the Khilafat and Holy places were treated in accordance with Muslim desires", and became a member of the sub-committee that was appointed to examine the question of non-cooperation.¹² When the terms of the Turkish peace were published on 15 May, 1920, Huq went as far as to say that "the next ten years would bring about the fall of the English and the emancipation of Islam through Afghanistan backed by Bolshevik Russia."¹³ From about this time, Huq began to show less interest in

the Khilafat affair. Though by religion a Muslim, Huq had much in common with the Hindu middle class in Bengal. In his youth he shared the cultural and intellectual flair of the Presidency College with his predominantly Hindu fellow students and also while he apprenticed as a law-practitioner under Sir Asutosh Mukherjee. In the Calcutta Special Congress he voiced his doubts, like Das and Pal, about the feasibility of the non-cooperation programme. Nevertheless, Huq was first and foremost a Muslim and his political involvement emanated from the burning desire to create for his coreligionists a bright future, away from religious obscurantism. He had in his mind the huge illiterate Muslim masses of eastern Bengal, passing their life in financial wretchedness. He felt the urge for bringing some extra privileges for his community for entry into higher studies and public appointments through legislation, for which he could neither prove himself disloyal, nor lose connection with the Legislatures. So he had to sacrifice his feelings for Khilafat when it demanded non-cooperation with the government of India.

As it appears from Police reports,¹⁴ he was forced to vote for non-cooperation in the Calcutta Special Congress. In November, he did not find the opportunity to express his views in the joint Congress-League session at Calcutta.¹⁵ From December, he joined the Nawab of Dacca and openly started an anti-noncooperation propaganda. The defection of Huq led to the centralisation of power in the Calcutta Khilafat Committee among non-Bengali Muslims. The association of the *Ulemas* did much to help the spread of the Khilafat movement among the rural Muslim masses, who were tied to their religious preachers by a bond of fanaticism. Khilafat committees were set up in villages, and agitators, mostly *ulemas* and *maulvis*, indiscriminately used religion as a weapon to intensify the excitement. It

was even said that civil disobedience and imprisonment for *Swaraj* were prescribed by Quranic laws. A *moulvi* of Kalaroa (Dt. Khulna) declared in a meeting that the Muslims would be looked upon as pork-eaters (a most sinful act according to the Quran) if they gave their votes in Union Board elections.¹⁶ Condemning voting as a sin the Muslims abstained from voting in Chittagong, Rajsahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur and Bakharganj districts.¹⁷ Badshah Mia, a Bengali *ulema* of the *Faraizi* sect, attained considerable success in inspiring the peasants of northern and eastern Bengal to agitate for the Khilafat.¹⁸ Bengali-speaking Akram Khan and Maniruzzaman Islamabadi were active in Calcutta among *lascars*, who hailed mostly from the district of Khulna and small islands of the Bay, and the Muslim servants in European households. In the mill areas, where non-Bengali Muslims predominated, Urdu-speaking Azad himself took the charge of fomenting troubles. Despite unity of goal and of actions, a cleavage prevailed between Bengali and non-Bengali Muslims of Bengal, which rapidly spread between the Provincial Khilafat Committee, a stronghold of Bengali Muslims, and the Calcutta Khilafat Committee, organisations of up-country Urdu-speaking Muslims. Their fundamental differences persisted in spite of the superficial unity brought about by the Khilafat agitation. Very often they clashed and agitated through the Muslim press. The I. B. reported clash between Bengali and non-Bengali factions over the use of the purse. The Calcutta Committee alleged that although the bulk of the Khilafat fund was contributed by non-Bengali Muslim merchants of Calcutta, its members received little pecuniary help from the fund due to draining by Bengali workers for non-cooperation propaganda. Calcutta Khilafatists also brought charges of inactivity and delay against the Secretary, Bengal Khilafat Committee, who in his own defence men-

tioned pressure of work in Calcutta and brought counter-allegations against the district sub-committees.¹⁹ There were even more differences over fundamentals that very soon ruined the facade of Muslim unity that was acquired through the Khilafat issue. The Muslim religious men, who took the leadership in the rural areas, were intent on redressing the wrong done to the *Khalifa*; they cared little for political independence of India, whereas to the radicals like Azad, the two issues were intricately mixed up. "The Arabic-knowing *Maulvis* and *Imams* want only the Khilafat", wrote the Bengal I. B., "while the English-knowing gentlemen want Khilafat as also *Swaraj* in India. Any consideration of the Turkish question would satisfy the Arabic-knowing *maulvis*, but those who are learned in English would not be satisfied until they get some more advantage in the political affairs of India, if not a complete *Swaraj* of the country."²⁰ The report was based on a slight misunderstanding of the reporter; the difference was not language based. But it is true that in general, the *maulvis* and *imams* were interested only in the Khilafat cause, while some of the laymen, who were deeply involved in the agitation, looked to India's freedom with equal intensity. This was a vital issue that led the Khilafat committees to maintain their separate identity without being merged into the Congress. Although the question of *Swaraj* was brought into prominence in Khilafat conferences, the provincial Khilafat Committees concentrated their attention mainly on the Turkish question,²¹ and even pro-nationalist Maniruzzaman Islamabadi gave first preference to the solving of the Khilafat question, and then to the gaining of *Swaraj* as the aims of the non-cooperation movement.²² In Bengal Das was aware of this dangerous conflict of interests in the components of the national army, and probably to check its growth he tried to maintain his link with the Calcutta Khilafat Committee members through

Azad. Throughout the movement in 1921-22 Congress leaders in Bengal wanted that the Khilafat movement should merge entirely with the Congress, having no separate existence of its own. They often complained of inconvenience created by the fact that Khilafat organisations were subjected to *fatwas* of *ulemas*, and that the *ulemas* did not always follow the advice of political leaders. At the Provincial Conference at Chittagong in April, 1922, Congressmen's bid to amalgamate the two sets of organisations was frustrated by the opposition of some members of the Calcutta Khilafat Committee and a few Khilafatists from Bihar. Majid Buksh, Secretary, Bengal Khilafat Committee supported the unity proposal, but the Calcutta Committee was deadly against amalgamation as its members were not interested in the continuation of agitation for *Swaraj* when the Khilafat question was settled. Several up-country Muslim merchants of Calcutta were reported to have expressed similar views in 'personal talks' with police agents. They condemned the Bardoli decision of Gandhi as it left the Khilafat question undecided. They said that they did not have any faith in the sincerity of Gandhi and other Hindu leaders ; still they maintained connections with the Congress because otherwise their movement would be weakened. They also declared that they would give up all agitations as soon as the Khilafat question is settled satisfactorily. With similar intentions the Noakhali district Khilafat Committee tried to separate itself from the District Congress Committee after the Bardoli decision had put the brake on the noncooperation movement. Under the guidance of Maulvi Abdur Rashid Khan, who had been inspired by Gandhi at the Calcutta Special Congress, this Khilafat Committee was a part and parcel of the Noakhali DCC till the Bardoli decision.²³ But this should not be treated as the personal view of individual members. One of the resolutions

taken by the All India Khilafat Conference at its Karachi Session in July, 1921, read thus : "If the British Government were to take any military measures against the Angora Government. .then the Mussalmans of India will be compelled to breaking of laws, that is civil disobedience, with the concurrence of the Congress and to proclaim the complete independence of India."²⁴ It may be reasonably inferred that the Khilafatist Muslims were not going to act in cooperation with the Congress for Indian independence so long as the British Government refrained from doing any injustice to the newly established Angora Government. For Gandhi, therefore, inclusion of Khilafat cause in the national programme as a means to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity, was little short of wild goose chase. His presupposition that the Hindu sympathy for Khilafat would alleviate Muslim hostility towards the Hindus, proved to be fallacious. The voluntary ban on cow-sacrifice during the Bakr-Id festival in 1921 met with a reverse when Moplahs in Malabar converted by force thousands of Hindus into Islam. In the jubilant days of harmony and good will one of the Ali brothers declared that it would be the happiest day of his life had he succeeded in bringing Mahatma Gandhi into the fold of Islam.²⁵ The Congress Working Committee under Gandhi's guidance preferred not to hurt Muslim sentiment by denouncing the Moplah out-break in too strong terms ; so it only expressed regrets for the deeds of violence.²⁶

Presence of multiple interests had, from the very beginning, been an unsurmountable hindrance to the unity cause which Gandhi aspired to bring through the Khilafat issue. In the first place, to the Bengali Hindu nationalists the Khilafat agitation was meaningless. "The Turkish Sultan and the *Khalifa* of the Muslims had given assent to the making over of a large part of his dominions to the Allies," noted a Hindu journal of Calcutta. "It is now to be consi-

dered whether it is proper for Indian Muslims to demand what the Sultan himself has given up."²⁷ For them who joined the noncooperation movement, the main concern was the country's *Swaraj* and little or no such for the *Khalifa* or his empire. At Midnapur, an overwhelmingly Hindu-majority district, there was practically no Khilafat movement except at the town of Kharagpur, where there was a sprinkling of non-Bengali Muslims, working in the B. N. R. Workshop.²⁸ It may be remembered in this context that throughout the noncooperation movement this district was restive no doubt but so, exclusively, on anti-Union Board agitations. Secondly, a large section of the Muslims considered the Khilafat to be the lone cause of grievance against British; and to them the *Swaraj* was only a *modus vivendi*. They expressed unreservedly the view that their joining the nationalist movement was but to strengthen their own cause. Thirdly, the Bengali Muslims, the religious preachers apart, were in a dilemma over their own identity. The points at issue to them, as suggested by a modern writer, were, if the Muslims of Bengal belonged to a Bengali, or a more broadly-based Indian nation, or to the world-wide Muslim nation based on Islamic brotherhood.²⁹ The question raised by a Muslim journal was indicative of the dilemma: "Are we first of all Muslims, or, inhabitants of India?"³⁰ Probably afraid of the Ali brothers' dislike, Gandhi did not answer the question while the Muslim leaders propagated the belief that first and foremost they were Muslims. Gandhi's vagueness in defining *Swaraj* had been another important factor in the failure of the unity cause. Nationalist Muslims got disillusioned over the interpretation of the term and failed to understand to what goal the movement was leading them. The editor of an extremist organ declared: "I do not understand this *Swaraj* business. Every eminent leader interprets it in his own individual way." However, the in-

terpretation given by this editor was in sharp contradiction to the official Congress line : "The British must pack up and be off accross the sea."³¹ Even a nationalist like Maniruzzaman Islamabadi seemed a little disturbed about the uncertainty surrounding the meaning of *Swaraj* : "Mahatma Gandhi always used to try to remain vague in his exposition of *Swaraj*." He was even more disturbed at the sense of morality and spirituality attached to the word : "There is no sense in congratulating ourselves on having attained *Swaraj* merely because we have learnt to take beatings. That is indicative of faint heartedness and limited aspirations. Congress should keep a sharp lookout lest people are deceived and misled by such specious explanations of *Swaraj*."³²

Apparently, Gandhi avoided such basic issues and tried to soothe Muslim sentiment by agreeing to their demands. The police noted that the occasional failure to prevent violence was openly admitted by Abul Kalam Azad, Akram Khan and others.³³ Khilafat processions and demonstrations scarcely remained non-violent ; volunteers frequently used sticks and clods of earth against the police, and their persuasions often led to riots, though not of a very serious nature, between Khilafatists and non-Khilafatists. "The *Ayats* (verses) of the Quran recited by the Maulanas— contained frequent references to *Jihad* and killing of the *Kaffirs*"— Sraddhanand cautioned Gandhi about the mischief inherent in the *Ayats*. "But when I drew his attention to this phase of the Khilafat movement," he reported, "Mahatmaji smiled and said, 'They are alluding to the British Bureaucracy.' In reply I said that it was all subversive of the idea of nonviolence and when the reversion of feeling came the Mohammedan *Maulanas* would not refrain from using these verses against the Hindus."³⁴ It will not be improper to say that Gandhi was well-aware of the frailty of the unity acquired through the Khilafat cause, but still he stressed on that

unity, to maintain his own leadership which would not be possible without Muslim support.

With the breakdown of the non-cooperation movement the superinduced unity broke into pieces. Blood-stained riots cracked the Congress-Khilafat unity and the rift widened as the so-long unaware masses were roused to their separate communal identities. They did not know what *Swaraj* really meant ; to them religious rites, even religious prejudices were real and of higher value. So the Muslim masses eagerly stood behind their leaders who cried aloud for reserving the rights of cow-slaughter and stopping Hindu music near the mosques. "Opportunist Muslim leaders found out in the Congress-Khilafat alliance a device to bargain with the Congress," pointed out Mc. Pherson, "and the fanatical Muslim journalists, with their ill-defined creed of religious obscurantism, hatred of British, aggressiveness towards the Hindus and opportunistic outlook towards Congress, best articulated the ebb and flow of popular Muslim opinion."³⁵ "The Muslims, as a result of the Khilafat movement became more firmly Muslim," regretted one of Gandhi's secretaries, "and drifted away, as a whole, from an attempt to contribute to the making of an Indian nationhood."³⁶ When the communal atmosphere was so gloomy, the nationalists also split themselves over Council-entry. Das had to form a new party early in 1923 and a new chapter of communal relations in Bengal was opened.

The Muslims and the Swarajists :

Das's Council-entry programme met with the severest opposition from the no-changer Congressmen as well as the Khilafatists. The Jamiat-ul-Ullema declared council-entry as *haram*. The Government reported that one of Das's meetings at Gaya nearly resulted in a general fight because of violent Muhammedan opposition. A leaflet was widely

distributed among the Muslims warning them against the Swaraj Party which, the leaflet alleged, was identified with the *Suddhi* and *Sangathan* movements.³⁷ Das's idea was to wreck all government measures in the Council and to achieve it to secure in his side as many votes as possible. With such an aim in view, in December, 1923, he tried and succeeded in coming to an understanding with the Muslims of his own province.

The sudden withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement had brought about a period of confusion. The Muslim press began to question the gains of the Congress-Khilafat alliance. "We have never been in favour of the Congress since the day of its creation", declared a Muslim journal, "The general body of Muslims do not understand political intricacies and as soon as the Khilafat question is settled, the bond of friendship between the Khilafatists and the Swarajists will be very much relaxed. No good has been done," the paper continued, "nor will even be done, either to the Khilafat or to the Muslim community by the fact that Muslims are going to jail in batches by transgressing the law."³⁸ Though professed to be components of the same movement, there was little identity of interest between the non-cooperators and Khilafatists. Das's connections with the Calcutta Khilafat Committee did not prove effective in the long run, as the divergence of objectives was fundamental. Among the Bengali Muslims, one section was moved by the same undiluted urge for Khilafat, while another denounced non-cooperation as irreligious. "It was blasphemous to utter '*Bande Mataram*' in conjunction with *Allaho Akbar*, the sacred *Kalima* of Allah",—such was the verdict given by one Muslim journal. "We have nothing against Mr. Gandhi, nevertheless, we do not think it at all proper for Muslims to adulate any one but Allah and the Prophet," repeated the same paper.³⁹ Maulana Abu Bakr

gave the *fatwa* that Muslims who had uttered '*Bande Mataram*', had become *Kaffirs*.⁴⁰ The pro-nationalist Azad and Akram Khan held minimal influence over their own community, so their alliance brought Das little additional strength. However, after secession from the Congress Das had to count on Muslim alliance, and his endeavours in this respect culminated in a pact which came to be known as the Bengal (Hindu-Muslim) pact. The Pact proved to be very generous to the Muslims. They were allotted shares in public services, local boards and the Calcutta Corporation, much higher than their population ratio.⁴¹ By the Pact Das was able to salvage Muslim support in his new venture of wrecking the constitution, but, at the same time, alienated Hindu sympathy. Hindus in general, excepting only Das's close followers, decried the undue preference given to the Muslims in the Pact. The Marwari community organised protest meetings. The *Ananda Bazar Patrika* wrote series of editorials denouncing the Pact. The Pact would encounter, as the paper anticipated, Hindu-Muslim rivalry in sharing government offices.⁴² And communal electorate as a principle can never be justified. "It is note-worthy", commented N. K. Bose, "that the interests which were involved (in the Pact) were less connected with the religion of Islam than with the temporal interests of the adherents of that religion."⁴³ Das was making political adjustments on political terms, but the Muslims were fortunate in getting temporal concessions for their religious identity and like Gandhi's Khilafat unity, Das's Pact also had a very weak foundation.

To some extent Das was successful in separating religion from politics, but he could not but follow the footsteps of Gandhi in making concessions for an artificial communal unity. Unfortunately, his generosity could not fully please the Muslims. The policy of

appeasement in lieu of Muslim support gave the Muslims the handle of formulating ever-increasing demands from the Congress and thus, barring the possibility of a lasting peace. "Of 268 elected members, only 32 are Muslims (in the B P C C)", complained a Muslim journal: "an executive council of 60 members has been formed, it includes only 19 Muslims ... of the 7 office-holders, only 2 are Muslims ... due consideration does not appear to have been given to Muslims."⁴⁴ The editor, of course, complained of Muslim indifference to political affairs and asked them to become four-anna members of the Congress to be properly represented. In the Calcutta Corporation, the Muslims complained, they were given only a score or so temporary, low-paid jobs,⁴⁵ while the Hindus felt bitter at the extravagance shown by the Swarajists towards the Muslims. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in retrospection wrote that during his tenure of office as the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation, Subhas Bose gave more jobs to the Muslims disproportionate to their population and in several instances, by the sacrifice of efficiency.⁴⁶ Das's Pact, though aimed at communal harmony, proved to be disastrous for that. Muslims were not to be satisfied and the Hindus were reluctant, if not opposed to oblige them. So the tension persisted.

Throughout the year 1924 Das utilised his personal influence and all sorts of persuasions to maintain the solidarity of the Swarajist-Muslim entente. A secret police report dated 21 August, 1924, notes that Das through Azad succeeded in bringing the Khilafat under the control of the Swaraj Party. All-India Muslim leaders, who came to attend the meeting of the All-India Swaraj Party at Calcutta, were reported to have been accommodated in the house of Subhas Bose instead of in that of Azad.⁴⁷ But whatever the government contention meant, all these moves achieved

for Das little in bringing about a real and lasting solution of the communal question. Neither the promises enlisted in the Bengal Pact, nor the appointments of Hussein Sahid Suhrawardy as Deputy Mayor and of Haji Abdur Rashid as the Deputy Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation did improve the relation between the Swaraj Party and the Calcutta Khilafat Committee. When the Swaraj Party brought a no-confidence motion against the Fazlul Huq Ministry, the Muslims construed it to be aimed at the Muslim ministers only. Leaflets with appeals to the Muslims to abstain from joining the nationalist movement were distributed in the Bongaon town, as well as in Mymensingh, Maldah and Noakhali. Pir Abu Bakr issued a *fatwa* supporting the Muslim Ministers and declaring the twenty Muslim Swarajists as Das's slaves and *Kaffirs*. The *Jamiat-ul-Ulema* passed resolutions condemning the activities of the Swarajists and protesting against Hindu interference as regards cow-killing.⁴⁸ A very influential Muslim journal pointed out that while Muslims were entitled to hold 55 percent of the jobs in the District Boards, Local Boards and Municipalities, in reality their number in comparison to that of the Hindus was "comparable to a drop of dew in the ocean." Besides, the paper commented that in government employment the Muslims received only one-twentieth part of the total money spent on salaries.⁴⁹

The genesis of communal problem, according to Das was the sense of depression of the Muslims of Bengal to find the Hindus occupying major positions of standing in society and government offices instead of them, although they were the numerically superior community in the province. It was obviously due to the Bengal Muslims' backwardness in education and wealth. The demands they made now for privileges and reservation of jobs, Das thought, would not be necessary to be made after *Swaraj* was attained, for

Swaraj would offer the panacea for all ills of all communities and people of the country. So until *Swaraj* was attained and for starting the fight for *Swaraj* in all earnestness and preparedness, not all but some privileges, they demanded, might be certainly given but only against their promise that they would bury the hatchet and join the fight for *Swaraj* wholeheartedly. Members of Das's community, however, had not this foresight and so grew suspicious of Das's real intentions. Perhaps they did not believe in the outcome of fight for *Swaraj* or in the sincere fight for it and so the communal tension persisted even after Das's Pact.

Gandhi, released on 5 February, 1924, took upon himself the painstaking task of relieving the country from the grasp of Hindu-Muslim tension. In numerous speeches and articles he requested both the communities to be tolerant of each other, sometimes asking the Hindus as the majority community to concede some favours to the minority. "If Hindus wish to see India free, they must be ready and willing to sacrifice in favour of their Mussalman and other brethren"—he said to the complaining Bengali Hindus. "I note that Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation has come in for a good deal of hostile criticism because of his having given 25 out of 33 appointments to Mussalmans.... In my humble opinion it is a creditable performance."⁵⁰ Answering Birla's complaints against Das's pact Gandhi wrote, "Mr. Das could not possibly do anything else,"⁵¹ But in the AICC meeting, where his support was crucial, he did not back up Das for getting his Pact approved by the Congress.

No matter whether the Congress approved or not, Das could not go back. For him the Muslim alliance was of prime importance. Muslim MLCs have to be prevented from casting votes in the government's favour and then

only his ambition of "mending or ending the Council" would be fulfilled. The two Muslim ministers, Huq and Ghuznavi dodging with their wives and the Congress withholding ratification of Bengal Pact, Das's attempt to wreck the Council met with newer and newer hurdles.

Huq and Ghuznavi picked up one Khan Bahadur Musharraf Hossain, an MLC, to table a motion in terms of the Bengal Pact. Das had a picquant time now. He could not agree. He reiterated his pledge but pointed out that his pledge "cannot come into effect until the attainment of full responsible government."⁵² It was a petting at the hornet's nest. Sir Abdur Rahim now joined Huq and Ghuznavi and clamoured that Das's promises were but empty baits. The nationalist press found in Musharraf Hossain's motion the hidden hand of the government to drive a wedge between the two communities.⁵³ But some Muslim press called to question Das's sincerity thus : "Had Mr. Das really desired that the pact would be put into practice, he and his party would certainly not have proposed to postpone indefinitely the resolution."⁵⁴ Another Muslim paper portrayed Das as a man of fragile and vacillating nature : "Similarity between what he says and does is extremely rare. When it came to deeds he failed to keep any of his pledges to the Muslims."⁵⁵

Das fought his lone battle. To counteract these slanders, he placed Sahid Suhrawardy as the Deputy Mayor of Calcutta and thus won over many wavering Muslim Swarajists to his side. But it was pointed out and it was indeed so, that in posts of lesser importance in the Corporation of Calcutta and in the Swarajist-controlled municipalities of Jessore, Dinajpur, Mymensingh, Nadia and Midnapur, the appointments of Muslims were short of their expected quota. A leading nationalist paper pointed out this negligence of the Swaraj Party to care for regions outside of the metro-

polis : "Hindu Congressmen were too busy in the metropolitan to retain the friendship of the Muslim masses acquired during the non-cooperation movement." Dacca was the strongest outpost of the Hindu *Bhadralok* amid the Muslim masses of Bengal. Das and several of his lieutenants had strong connections with the district. It was indeed one of the chief bases of Das and it was with the help of the Dacca District Congress Committee members that he could recapture the Bengal Congress. The paper complained that Das himself, the President of the DCC, and his two secretaries, all resided in Calcutta and the Dacca office was in a moribund state with only "a nice building with a sign-board over the door and a few so-called volunteers residing therein."⁵⁶ It was negligence no doubt, for the same holding ultimately formed the plinth of a communal organisation like Fazlul Huq's Proja Party.

Swaraj Party's motion of no-confidence on Ministers aggravated the tension. It was an opportune moment for Huq to win over Muslim public opinion to his side by giving a communal colour to the whole affair—that the Swaraj Party being a Hindu-dominated party, tried to wreck the Muslim Ministry. Rumours of any kind vitiated the atmosphere. A rumour that the Hindus were trying to get two members of their community as Ministers ousting the Muslims, was alleged to be spread by the government to create bitterness among the Muslims against the Hindus.⁵⁷ Another rumour suggesting the replacement of Mallik by Nawabali Chaudhuri was also alleged to be spread by the government as a means to seduce the Muslims.⁵⁸ Muslim Ministers utilised the opportunity for reinforcing the basis of their support in the community. Ghuznavi was reported to have remitted his first month's pay to erect a mosque at Tangail, his native town. In their attempt to bring more Muslim MLCs to their side the Muslim Ministers were reported to have promis-

ed greater number of appointments to Muslim youths and establishment of separate colleges for them.⁵⁰

Das had to counter the attacks of the government and communal Muslims single-handed. His organ praised the role of the Muslim Swarajists in the Legislative Council.⁶⁰ His pact with the Muslims, though drafted on the sincerest belief of ending Hindu-Muslim bitterness,⁶¹ created nothing but dissatisfaction among both the communities. The Muslims realising that they held the balance between the Hindu nationalists and the bureaucracy, frequently changed sides, and opportunism, bribery and political gambling became the order of the day. None of the leaders had the ability, nor the moral courage to state where the canker of animosity and quarrel lay. A journalist lamented: "Mr. Gandhi tries to put out these flames of contention by fasting, Mr. Mohammad Ali by abandoning religious observances and Mr. Das by making pacts."⁶² Hindu press blamed Das for allowing the Muslims to pile up their demands: "Since our Swaraj friends made the historic pact with some Muslim politicians, our Muslim friends have refused to do everything without a pact. Is India to have a Reserve Bank?" Commented one paper ironically, "If so, there must be a pact under which Muslims would get so many seats. Are police atrocities to be condemned? A pact must first be made on percentage of Muslim appointments in the police service."⁶³

The Hindu nationalists' scowl was not unjustified. Huq's craze for power and the degree of unscrupulousness he could resort to get into power, were well-known facts. As early as in 1919 the then Viceroy Chelmsford wrote to the then Secretary of State Edwin Montagu, "Fazlul Huq attended the Governor's peace celebration dinner. The next day or the day after, he proceeded to advise Muslims not to attend the celebrations including a meal."⁶⁴ Early in 1925, when Bengal

was passing through a constitutional crisis owing to Swarajist opposition, Lytton solicited Huq's alliance not because he would enrich the government by his services, but that otherwise he would join the opposition. "He is entirely unscrupulous," wrote the Governor, "and heavily burdened with debt. Persued as he is by his creditors he will do anything for money and will probably intrigue against Government if not a member of it."⁶⁵ It took only fifteen days for Huq to prove the Governor's apprehensions correct. "Fazlul Huq was won over by C. R. Das on payment of money and promises of seeking new briefs for him",⁶⁶ wrote a frustrated Lytton. However, the sort of man Fazlul Huq was, never became a problem to the government, for he could be reconquered by the same old method, and actually he was, as later events would show. Such fickleness of Fazlul did not create however, any bad impression over the unimaginative and ferociously bigotted Muslim masses. The bulk of his political speeches invariably contained hatred against Hindu political leaders and advice for remaining loyal to the British. Another very popular leader of the Muslims, Sir Abdur Rahim also consistently preached loyalty. Thus the majority among the Muslim population in Bengal adhered loyally to the British. In December, 1924, when violent acts committed by revolutionary *samiti* members caused widespread confusion and disorder, a Muslim deputation waited on the Viceroy to reassert their loyalty to the British Crown and to put up the demand for communal representation in the Bengal Council. Such a demand very well suited the government at this stage. The Viceroy gratefully assured them that the greatest care was taken to protect the interests of the community and thanked them with the remark: "I have not failed to note that in the arrests recently made under the provisions of Regulation III or under the Ordinance no member of your Community has been involved".⁶⁷ Muslim

hostility towards Hindu nationalism was thus being continually excited by the bureaucracy. Situations in 1925 became so bitter that after Das's death one Hindu daily deplored : "In the vast multitude of mourners who assembled to do honour to the memory of the late C. R. Das, we noticed a microscopic representation of the Muhamedan community. We are both pained and surprised at it," continued the paper, "If even there was a community for which the late Das had laboured—even to the extent of risking his popularity it was the Muhamedans, and it is an irony of fate that now that the leader is gone, that community should be found so lacking in their sense of gratitude to the deceased "64

The sudden death of Das left Bengal in political disarray. Bereft of any outstanding leader, the Swaraj Party was heading for a clash between the protagonists and antagonists of the Bengal Pact. The Muslims were divided into two broad groups—one supporting joint electorate and the other separate electorate, while a third group comprised of men like Fazlul Huq who did not adhere to any fixed principle. An aggressive form of Hindu communalism was being preached by the Hindu Mahasabha which began to gather adherents from the Congress. Parts played by the bureaucracy, the Congress, and individual Hindu and Muslim leaders worse complicated the already complex communal situation.

Worsening Communal Relations

In January 1926, Lytton asked Sir Abdur Rahim to form the Ministry. By that time deserters from the Swaraj Party formed the Independent Muslim Party led by the Suhrawardis. Huq befriended some such deserters and formed the Bengal Muslim Nationalist Party with the creed of non-acceptance of office. It appears from the government reports that Rahim's party commanded the largest number

of Muslim supporters.⁶⁹ In forming the Ministry Rahim could not get however the required support either from the Swarajists or the Responsivists led by Byomkesh Chakravarti. So he resigned. Next day Lytton sent for Chakravarti and with the offer of forming Ministry warned him that he might not get any Muslim support since he failed to give support to the Abdur Rahim Ministry. The same Lytton had told Rahim the previous day that he should not expect any Hindu support.⁷⁰ He had played well the Hindus and the Muslims against each other to enliven the force of communal discord. The Chakravarti and then the Ghuznavi Ministry survived only seven months; their successors P. C. Mitra and Musharraf Hussain for nine months only. The rulers could rightly claim that no question of self-rule by the Indians would arise since there was not yet any representative political body. "It must be recognised that vocal as they are, the Indian political parties do not as yet represent India,"⁷¹—suggested Lord Irwin a year later, and to a great extent, correctly.

In the metropolis, the Governor was one of the architects of disunity, while in rural Bengal government officials played their parts. Since 1925, the Bengal government undertook a policy to organise and coordinate Muslim political groupings in support of the government. For, the bureaucrats understood that the best way to check the growth of nationalism in India was to articulate the Muslims to the interests of the government. District officers were instructed to patronise Muslim organisations by placing men recommended by them in public offices. The political department in Calcutta recognised the *Islamia Anjuman* in the Dacca district as representing pro-government Muslims. Besides endeavouring to stop rivalry between Muslims themselves, the *Anjuman* declared as its aim "to organise for the next Legislative Council election so that Muhammedan candidates

may not be tempted to seek the support of the Swaraj Party."⁷² The district officers also encouraged Muslim leaders to organise the peasant community, even to make common cause with *rayats* of the Hindu community.⁷³ A ready sequel was a Muslim-Namasudra alliance in the Dacca Division against the high-caste Hindus. In the Hindu community the bulk of agriculturists came from the Namasudra caste. In eastern Bengal they were well-organised by the Mallik brothers, one of whom, Surendranath Mallik, was unseated in the Council by the caste-Hindu-Swarajist conspiracy, as they were made to believe. The Bengal government felicitated the Muslim-Namasudra alliance and sent note to the Government of India in the following manner : "In the past Muslims and Namasudras have been at daggers drawn and the Gopalganj subdivision was the scene of serious riots between these communities in 1923. It is interesting that they should now be combining when there is tension between Hindus and Muslims in most other parts of Bengal."⁷⁴

Hindu-Muslim division in the province was more than complete. Gandhi expressed his inmost thoughts on the problem and regretted that communalism had become inextricably mixed up with politics. He confessed, at the same time, that neither he nor his colleagues, Ajmal Khan, Ansari and Azad, had made a worthwhile impact on the Muslims.⁷⁵ In April, 1926, Calcutta experienced a severe communal riot that raged for fifteen consecutive days after which the situation was brought under control but tension prevailed. One noticeable feature of the period was the predominance of religious sentiments which in most cases accounted for the riots. In the middle of 1925 tension prevailed over the burial of a *fakir* in the New Market area of Calcutta, and the direct cause of the April riots in 1926 was also religious. *Suddhi* and *Sangathan* movements organised by Malaviya, Lajpat Rai

and Swami Sraddhanand were causing alarm to the Muslims in Bengal, for although the movements were confined to Western India, the Bengali Hindu Press sympathised unequivocally with them. McPherson attributes frustration on the part of the Muslims to be the cause of such aggressive religious zeal.⁷⁶

The repercussions of the Calcutta riot were felt at Kharagpur and Pabna, and in Calcutta it was revived in July to spread in different parts of eastern Bengal.

The main feature of these riots was economic communal boycott. The police reported that the Marwaris of Calcutta imported a number of Hindu dyers from their own country and local Muslim dyers were out of occupation. The boycott of Muslim bandsmen, coachmen and *syces*, the police reported, was likely to spread to Muslim tailors during the *Pujas*. At Faridpur the Muslims took the offensive when hackney-carriage drivers refused to take Hindu passengers. Serious inconvenience was caused in Gopalganj (Faridpur district) by the Muslims' refusal to supply goats for sacrifice. The Muslims all over the district were reported to be starting a sort of economic boycott of Hindus by opening Muslim shops and arranging for other supplies and services by Muslim agency alone.⁷⁷ political tension thus affected the day-to-day life of the non-political ordinary members of the society. The evils of the Khilafat agitation percolated to the lowest depth. Muslim divines continued to hold important positions in political meetings and conferences and spread the doctrine of separatism among the members of the community, while intellectual leaders made efforts for raising literacy in their community. The Muslim Conference at Pirojpur, district Barisal, presided over by Fazlul Huq, resolved to ask for monetary help from the people as well as from the government for opening junior and senior *madrassas* and primary schools in different loca-

lities.⁷⁸ The Muslim press was ceaselessly fomenting communalism. Fazlul Huq, the editor, printer and publisher of *Mohammadi* was prosecuted for displaying communal spirit during the April riots.⁷⁹ "The state of tension was deliberately kept alive in Calcutta and spread in Bengal by leaders", reported Birley, Member of the Executive Council.⁸⁰ On the face of such aggressive communalism of the Muslims, the Hindus began to be conscious about safeguarding their own interests. Paudit Malaviya in a speech before the Durwan and Jamadar union at Calcutta advised them to be true Hindus, to improve their physique by wrestling, to be united and to sacrifice their lives for religion's sake.⁸¹

The tussle over the Bengal Pact continued till sometime after Deshabandhu's death. The national leaders would not entertain any provincial bias, so they refused to approve the pact which became a stumbling block in its way. The Provincial Conference of the Congress held at Krishnanagar in June, 1926, ended in a turmoil over the issue of the pact.⁸² B. C. Roy, T. C. Goswami, N. C. Chunder, N. R. Sarkar and Sarat C. Bose issued a manifesto stating that they approved the principles contained in the pact, but since it was not ratified by the Congress, nor by either of the communities, they would not make it an issue in the next election.⁸³ The manifesto disclosed their indecision about the pact—its obliteration would close the door of Muslim alliance, while adherence was likely to cost Hindu allegiance. Dacca District Congress workers, meeting at Munshiganj resolved that they would not support the candidature of those who supported the pact, and requested the BPCC to select such candidates who did not adhere to the pact.⁸⁴ Hindu Congressmen's uneasiness over the pact clearly manifested itself by their unwillingness to favour the Muslims any more. They had had enough of experience of "favouring

the minority community with some privileges" since the Khilafat movement, and being the minority in their own province Bengali Hindus began asserting their own rights.

To what extent should Gandhi be made responsible for such a turn of events ? In a letter to G. D. Birla (27 April, 1926) he admitted his helplessness : "Anything I say at present will just be a cry in the wilderness." He could not disclaim his own responsibility for mixing up religion with politics. Asked by the journalist Durga Das how would he encounter Jinnah's charge that "his was a pseudo-religious movement likely to lead to a reactionary revivalism", Gandhi replied that "his own idiom was the only one that the masses could grasp. The villagers responded to his call, for they lived nearer to God than did townsfolk, and understood his message as a call for self-abnegation and self-purification. The Muslim masses instinctively understood the religious issue and would feel brotherly towards non-Muslims who expoused their cause."⁸⁵ But unfortunately the 'minority community' could not get over their obsession of the constant danger of their religion among an enemy population despite concessions like the right of cow-killing and stoppage of music before mosque, extra privileges of employments, reservation of offices and so forth granted by the other community till the latter naturally felt tired and also wary. The bureaucracy seemed to enjoy the situation by "continuously dangling before them (the Muslims) a carrot in the shape of greater privileges and concessions."⁸⁶

With Gandhi's self-imposed retirement till March, 1928, the Congress was being run practically by the Swarajists. In Bengal non-Swarajist leaders put all the blames on the Swarajists for communal tension there. "The Swarajist leadership systematically tried to bribe the Muhammedan members of the Legislature to join the campaign of obstruction," wrote B. C. Pal. "Mr. Das's Hindu-Muslim Pact was

a part of this policy. This pact is considered by many to be responsible for the counter-intrigues of Sir Abdur Rahim.⁸⁷ Motilal, Jinnah and Sapru were making, in the words of Durga Das, "Herculean efforts to bring about a national identity of views on the pattern of self-Government and the adjustment of communal claims through an All-Party Convention."⁸⁸ The All-Parties Conference that met at Delhi in January, 1925 drew up a plan of reserving in Punjab and Bengal 50 and 40 per cent seats respectively for the Muslims in the legislatures and other elective bodies. Though in both the provinces the ratio of Muslim population was higher (54 and 56 percent respectively), Muslim backwardness accounted for the fixation of such numbers. But neither of the communities were happy about the settlement. The Unity Conference that met at Simla in mid-September, 1927, failed to come to any agreement. The chief obstacle was the question of joint electorate. Irwin rightly pointed out that though important leaders like Sir Ali Imam, the Raja of Mamudabad and Jinnah supported joint electorate, the overwhelming bulk of Muslim opinion did not accept it on any terms whatsoever.⁸⁹ In Bengal Sir Abdur Rahim propagated the demand for separate communal electorates. In the Bengal Provincial Muslim Conference at Barisal on 8 May, 1927, he advised Bengali Muslims not to yield to the threats and demands of Hindu politicians on the question of joint electorate, otherwise Muslim interest would be seriously endangered.⁹⁰ The AICC did its best towards communal unity. At a session at Calcutta on 29 October, 1927, it appointed a Committee with Azad, the Ali Brothers, Ansari, Kitchlew, Ajmal Khan, J. M. Sengupta, Subhas Bose and Motilal Nehru for carrying on propaganda among both communities for harmony and cooperation. But the Congress policy could not overcome its tendency of appeasement towards the Muslims which hurt Hindu sentiments.

The Marwari Chamber of Commerce took strong exception to the AICC resolution at Calcutta, relating to cow-slaughter, which caused wide-spread pain among Hindus. "Such grave religious questions as would hurt general Hindu public feelings and promote disunity and rupture in the Congress", the Marwaris suggested, "should not be taken up in Congress for national interest."⁹¹

The Congress policy to bring about communal harmony by conceding aggressive communal demands of the Muslims failed. At Kutubdia in Chittagong the Muslims held up the Hindu *Rathayatra* (car procession). In the elections in Mymensingh and Pabna not a single Hindu was returned inspite of the existence of joint electorate. The result was nearly the same in all the Muslim majority districts—Chittagong, Noakhali, Tripura, and Barisal. In Jessore the Muslims swept the polls and captured the offices of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the District Board.⁹² Even the BPCC President Bose was startled by these results. The supporters of separate electorates, even Sir Abdur Rahim, Bose said, should change their views now.⁹³ Hindu public opinion began to assemble forcefully against these Muslim gains at the cost of the Congress. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* accused the Congress for the "abandonment of the principle of nationalism and substitution for it a system of bribery." The editor deplored that "the bureaucracy has taken the leaf out of our politicians and is buying votes for jobs." It was also suggested that the Muslim politicians' demands for reservation of seats might be tamed "if only the Hindus in Bengal claimed a similar reservation of seats for them as a minority community."⁹⁴ At the Salap union in Pabna district Hindu voters and candidates were reported to have retired in a body as a protest against the communalistic attitude of the Muslims.⁹⁵ Hindu reaction to the government favouritism towards the Muslims was

sharp : "Muslims are offered clerkships of Rs. 40-in the Lower Division of the Secretariat (in Bengal) on preferential terms. The various *Anjumans* are encouraged to make recommendations to qualified candidates (Muslims, of course) for appointments in the Lower Division."⁹⁶ The nationalist press raised objections to the manner in which the *Rathayatra* at Kutabdia was held up and complained that the car was looted before the thana and the *Khasmahal* office.⁹⁷ It is thus clear that from the offensive in 1921-24 against the bureaucracy, the Hindu nationalists had to retreat to the defensive in 1928. The bureaucracy had very cunningly involved the Congress in bidding higher and higher prices for Muslim cooperation. Gandhi's moral force could no more maintain its grip on the Congress volunteers who felt driven from the bright spectrum of politics to the shady competition with the Muslims for the spoils of offices. The fight against the bureaucracy aborted to a fight between the communities for trifles.

Nehru Report & Gandhi's Persuasions

In a desperate attempt at presenting before the British government a united demand of self-government within the British dominions, the Congress drew up a comprehensive plan clearly vindicating the respective claims of the communities. It was drawn by a Committee appointed by the the unity conference and submitted in August, 1928. Since the Committee was headed by Motilal Nehru, the report came to be known as the Nehru Report. It made attempts to appease communal sentiment by proposing a balance between Hindu-majority and Muslim-majority provinces. But it did have no easy sail through the All Parties Convention at Calcutta. Jitendra Lal Banerjee, a reputed pro-Gandhi leader in the Bengal Congress, moved a resolution demanding reservation of seats in Bengal for the Hindus on popula-

tion basis. According to the Nehru Committee's recommendations, the Muslims were to get 255 seats in the Bengal Legislative Council as against 210 of the Hindus. "But as the character of the population of the districts varied," argued the mover, "unless seats were reserved for the Hindus, they would not be able to send in more than 150. Thus the Muslims would get sixty more than their due share and the Hindus sixty less, which meant 120 seats more in favour of the Muslims." The motion was put to vote and carried. If accepted, the resolution would mean the rejection of the Nehru Report, so at the request of President Ansari, Banerjee agreed that the matter be left over.⁹⁸ The report thus received a set-back at the very beginning of its career. It did not receive a welcome among the Muslims, either. At the Bengal All-Parties Muslim Conference (Calcutta, 23 December, 1928), H. S. Suhrawardy as the Chairman of the Reception Committee accused the report of having dealt harshly with the Muslim community. "If they felt that injustice had been done to their community", he said, "it was their duty to assert their rights."⁹⁹ The Muslim League at its Calcutta session, split on the Report—one section supporting it, another opposing, and a third favouring a compromise. The All-Parties Muslim Conference held at Delhi on 1 January, 1929, under the auspices of the Aga Khan, passed a resolution declaring that "no constitution, by whomsoever proposed or devised, will be acceptable to Indian Mussalmans unless it conforms with the principles embodied in the resolution", viz., a federal system with complete autonomy vested in the constituent states, separate electorates, reservation of 33 percent seats in the Central Legislature for the Muslims, etc. That simply meant that the Muslims were not going to concede even a fraction of their demands. Besides a resolution was passed in this meeting with Shaukat Ali in the chair that read: "The

Congress has cast off its sham non-violence in its dealing between the communities, and the continuance of this attitude of the majority would lead to a civil war.” Bose’s paper *Liberty* felt sorry for this outright rejection of the Nehru report and reminded the Muslims that Pandit Nehru had left the door open for further discussion and negotiation.¹⁰⁰

All these developments failed to bring any considerable change in Gandhi’s attitude. He continued to advise Congressmen to foster confidence in the Muslims that the outlook of Congress activities were truly nationalistic. “The best way to increase Muslim interest in the Congress is for Congressmen to serve them,” he said in a press interview. “Convince them that the Congress is as much theirs as any body else’s... I repeat that the best way of winning over the Mussalmans is by seeking occasions of service and assuring them that the resolution of the Congress on the communal question means what it says.”¹⁰¹ Throughout 1929 he pleaded for maintaining communal unity in his usual way. “I believe that unity between Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Parsis, Jews, Christians and others is essential for the attainment of *Swaraj*. . Indeed I have no desire to obtain *Swaraj*, even if it was possible, at the sacrifice of a single legitimate interest of a single minority... I do not believe the Mussalman to be the natural enemy of the Hindus...”¹⁰² Too much concerned about the interests of the minority, Gandhi came to be looked upon as a betrayer of the interests of the majority community who took upon themselves the task of preserving their own rights, The Bengal Provincial Hindu Sabha Conference (28 August, 1929) resolved that in case the Nehru Report was reopened for conceding any further communal demands of the Muslims, the Hindu Mahasabha will revert to its original position of uncompromising nationalism and will stoutly resist the introduction

of communalism in any shape or form in the future constitution of India.

Gandhi lost his importance as the mouthpiece of the nationalists and gained little of the confidence of the Muslims. To the Muslims he appealed not to misunderstand him—the *Swaraj* he longed for was a welfare state for all the classes and communities. “I acknowledge no other God but the one God of Truth and righteousness. . By ‘*Ramarajya*’ I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean by ‘*Ramarajya*’ Divine Raj, the Kingdom of God in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice. .”¹⁰³ At the Lahore session of the Congress in December, 1929 he drafted a resolution stating in clear terms the Congress stand on communal question: “The Congress believes that in an Independent India the communal question can only be solved on a strictly national basis. This Congress assures the Sikhs, the Muslims and other minorities that no solution thereof in any future constitution will be acceptable to the Congress that does not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned.”¹⁰⁴ In the *Young India* he stressed on a nationalist approach; “Independent India cannot afford to have communal representation.”¹⁰⁵ But none of his assurances could bring the Muslims under the Congress flag to fight the bureaucracy. Shaukat Ali alleged that the Civil Disobedience Movement launched by the Congress was not for *Swaraj* but for Hindu Raj and against Mussalmans. In reply, Gandhi pointed out that “Civil disobedience is a process of developing internal strength and therefore an organic growth Resistance to the salt tax can hurt no single communal interest.”¹⁰⁶ Apparently, his reasons remained unheeded to, and Congressmen in general accepted Muslim opposition to the civil disobedience movement as a settled fact. “It is significant,” noted the Bengal government, “that the Congress leaders intend to confine the no-tax

campaign for the present in districts where the Muslims are not strong.”¹⁰⁷ “Does not the Hindu-Mussalman question centre round a division of political power—spoils of office?”—Gandhi tried to bring confidence in the Muslims—“How can the movement be anti-Mussalman or for Hindu Raj when no one identified with it has the slightest notion, till independence is reached, of possessing any political power?”¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the Muslims started a vigorous anti-civil disobedience campaign. In Faridpur, in one week of June ten anti-civil disobedience meetings were held, of which eight were organised by Muslims. Modern writers have recorded that Muslim gatherings at Calcutta also expressed hostility towards the movement, and Muslim legislators supported demands for extra-finance for jails and police.¹⁰⁹ It may be remembered that in the 1920s Calcutta Muslims had been the mainstay of Gandhi’s power in Bengal. In the District Muslim Association meeting at Barisal and presided over by Fazlul Huq, it was resolved that Muslims should not join Gandhi’s movement.¹¹⁰ In the Tripura District Board election, the Muslim chairman did not get his community’s votes because of his own pro-Congress attitude.¹¹¹ The Muslim press in Bengal asked the community to keep aloof from the Congress-led movement “because the main purpose of the movement was not independence”, declared one journal, “but rather the laying of the foundation for Hindu independence. It is merely an open plot to crush the Muslim.”¹¹² The Muslim All-Parties Conference meeting at Delhi in March, 1930, also resolved not to participate in the movement as it was “calculated to frighten the government into accepting Dominion Status with the communal settlement embodied in the Nehru Report.”¹¹³ Gandhi immediately set upon removing their misconception: “The Nehru Constitution having lapsed the communal solution has naturally lapsed.

The Lahore Congress resolution mentions in so many words " ", he tried to bring the Muslims to reasons, "that the question might have to be reconsidered so as to give satisfaction to all the parties concerned."¹¹⁴ But the Muslims had greater confidence on the leaders of their own community than on the Congress whom Gandhi represented. They refrained from taking part in the Independence Day celebrations, organised by the Congress.¹¹⁵ The government felt somewhat complacent at the news that the Muslims did not take part in the Bandabilla Satyagraha organised by local Hindus with the support of the BPCC; they, on the contrary, were reported to have paid up their dues.¹¹⁶ In May, 1930, Dacca was swept by a tide of communal riots during which the Nawab of Dacca, in league with the police, encouraged communalism to create a rupture between the Hindus and the very few Muslims who had joined the civil disobedience movement.¹¹⁷ Within a decade of the spectacular unity achieved through the Congress-Khilafat alliance, the nationalist struggle was facing a crisis of the severest nature in the form of communal hatred and jealousy. The Congress lost all importance as the organ of national sentiments of the Indian people. There was, of course, nothing new in the Muslim crusade against the Congress, excepting that the attack grew in volume with the passing of time. What was new, was the loss of faith on the part of the Hindus. They could not rely on the Congress anymore, on the otherhand they accused it of profaning Hindu national aspirations and of promoting communalism in the name of national unity. The all-India leadership of the Congress could not absolve themselves of such allegations as knowingly or unknowingly, they had pursued a policy that bred communalism. The Hindus, so long free from narrow sectarian interest, gradually began to sever their allegiance from the Congress and to veer round the communalist Hindu

Mahasabha. Government reports indicated the growing strength of the Hindu Mahasabha among the Hindu nationalists.¹¹⁸ Gandhi's intercession for tolerance fell flat on both the communities. "Hindu-Muslim unity is not a question of bargain that we should continue fighting for one, two, or five seats," he said at the All India Muslim League Council, "unity can be achieved by giving up mutual fears and mistrust. To them (the Hindus) I would say the same thing as I used to do in 1921, viz., that voluntary surrender on the part of either community, preferably by the majority community – of all rights and privileges would immediately effect this unity. Let them say to the Mussalmans: "Have as big a share of the spoils as you want; we will be content to serve you"¹¹⁹ But the Muslims preferred to remain outside the congress, not because of any feeling of loyalty towards the government, but because of their distrust of Congress politics. In this atmosphere of bitterness and ill-feeling a new apple of discord was thrown by the imperialists in the shape of the Communal Award.

Communal Award and Poona Pact

In November, 1932, the Third Round Table Conference met at London. It was, of course, somewhat of a farce, as Congress leaders used to stigmatise it, because there was no representation from the Congress, nor from the Indian Princes, nor again, from the British Labour Party. The deliberations were inconclusive except for the British Prime Minister's Communal Award, on the plea of putting an end to the communal controversies in India. The Award gave separate electorate not only to the Indian Muslims but also to the so-called "Depressed Classes," the Scheduled Castes of the Hindu society. The Award was the culmination of British policy of encircling the middle class Hindu by a chain of hostile sects. The policy of 'Divide and

Rule' was now applied to cause a rift in the totality of the Hindu society. The All-India National Trade Union Federation condemned the scheme as a "double-roller, capitalism and communalism, to crush socialism and nationalism." Gandhi began a fast unto death in the Yervada jail as a protest against the bifurcation of the Hindu society. Five months ago he had warned Sir Samuel Hoare that if depressed classes were torn away from the main body of the Hindus, as it was proposed in the Round Table Conference, he would resist it with his life.¹²⁰ His fast caused wide-spread sensation, alarm and anxiety to the nationalist leaders. One of his nearest and dearest followers felt "annoyed with him for choosing a side-issue for his final sacrifice."¹²¹ The steps taken by the AICC following the Award would justify in what spirit it was taken by Gandhi and his lieutenants in all-India leadership. However, the sensation created by the declaration of the fast made Viceroy Willingdon somewhat nervous, as "Gandhi had numerous admirers in the West, especially in the U. S. A."¹²² The Award gave the Bengal Council 254 seats divided oddly among 117 Muslims. 11 for European Association, 19 for the business community (3 Indians and 16 Europeans), 3 for Anglo Indians, 2 for Indian Christians, 5 for landholders, 8 for labour, 2 for University, 5 for ladies, and the remaining 82 seats were marked as general. Of the general seats, again, 30 were reserved for scheduled caste Hindus. They could be returned from the unreserved 52 seats also. The Award was a point-blank assault on Bengali Hindu middle class leadership of the national movements—a very welcome stipulation to the communal Muslims. But the non-Bengali Hindu leaders in the National Congress got more worried about Gandhi's fast than about the pitiable condition of their fellow-brethren in Bengal. Hindu leaders from all parts of the country including Scheduled Caste Hindus rushed to Poona to per-

suade Gandhi to break his fast which he did after five days. Under the guidance of Pandit Malaviya a Hindu leaders' conference had met at Bombay. Backing up the deliberations of the conference, Gandhi representing the caste Hindu and Ambedkar on the scheduled castes side, came to the understanding known as the Poona Pact. Again Bengal's cries were lost under a national Pact. The Poona Pact provided the depressed classes in the provincial legislatures with more than double the number of seats originally prescribed by the Communal Award. In the Province of Bengal the Namasudras had organised themselves to make a strong demand for representation in the Council, and they even had allied with the Muslims, their traditional enemies in the villages, against the Caste Hindu Congress leadership. These scheduled castes were given unnecessary weightage at the cost of the middle-class Hindus, who had already been suffering from the extra weight given to the backward but majority community, viz, the Muslims. A natural reaction to the Poona Pact drove the Bengali Hindus further away from the Mahatma-led Congress. A glaring question was asked in Bengal : what was the Poona Pact for, if not to rescind the objectionable elements of the Communal Award ? "The Poona fast did bring some rights to the Scheduled castes," wrote Subhas Bose, "but even that good was smothered by his (Gandhi's) implicit acceptance of the Communal Award as a whole and by his partial acceptance of separate electorate in the case of the Scheduled Castes."¹²³ Seven members of the Bengal Legislative Council wrote in disgust to Sir Tej Bahadur Sepru, "We feel that it is a matter of keen and widespread regret that Bengali opinion was not consulted before the Poona Pact was finally agreed to. It is also clear to us that no serious attempt was made by the authors of that Pact to get at the relevant facts and figures so far as this province is concerned. It will be no

overstatement of the case to say that the result of the Pact if given effect to will reduce the Hindu community to a position of inconsequence and impotence in the Bengal Legislative Council and render the working of the Reforms next to impossible.¹²⁴ Jitendralal Banerjee moved and passed in the Bengal Council a motion condemning the Pact as "inapplicable in the peculiar circumstances of Bengal, is injurious to Bengali Hindu interests and subversive of their solidarity." Forces of history compelled Bengal to take steps away from the rest of India.

Needless to say, the Communal Award pleased the Muslim Community to a great extent. The All Bengal Muslim Young Men's Conference at Calcutta (12 October, 1934) made protests against the anti Award Campaign of the Hindu leaders. Sir Abdur Rahim even deplored that eminent public men like Pandit Malaviya should have chosen a period of communal tension to force the question of Communal Award on the country. As if, they were ignorant of any flaws in the Award that could have hurt Hindu sentiment or interest. They were bargaining with the Government knowing quite well that they held the trump card. The Punjab leader Main Fazl-i Hussain had sent in December, 1930 a message to the Secretary of State for India through the Viceroy that it was unfair to the Muslims, who had kept away from Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement, to make them accept what the Nehru Report had offered them. He had coupled the message with the threat that if the Muslim demands were not conceded before the reforms were introduced, he and his followers would throw in their lot with the congress in its political struggle against the Government. "This threat worked", added Durga Das, "and ultimately resulted in the Communal Award."¹²⁵

The Communal Award was the legalization of Muslim demands based on communal lines. Being gratified by the

Government in every demand, Muslim leaders were intent on maintaining confusion in the communal situation, which was perceptibly deteriorating in Bengal. In east Bengal the *zamindar-rayat* relations were gradually taking a communal colour. They mixed up the claims of separate electorates and reserved seats in the Council with economic difficulties and united the Muslims against Hindus in rural areas. Every concern of the Hindu society were explained to the illiterate masses as Congress work and to misrepresent the Congress as an organisation of the Hindu landlords trying to bring about a Hindu welfare state. The Congress could not wholeheartedly throw its lot with the peasants as its leaders had to count on the votes of the propertied class with franchise, for entering council and municipal bodies. That did entrance to a large extent the propaganda of the anti-Congress Muslims. In 1928. Congressmen helped passing the amendment on the Tenancy Act of 1885, empowering zamindars to enhance taxes. "By so doing damaged their cause heavily in the eyes of Muslim agricultural classes", remarked the Governor about a decade later.¹²⁶ On the otherhand, "I am fighting for a satisfactory solution of the bread problem, or in other words, of the '*dal-bhat*' problem of Bengal," pronounced Fazlul Huq, "and also for the thorough overhauling of the Tenancy Laws in Bengal so as to give some relief to agriculturists," these differences of opinion of Hindu and Muslim leaders on economic affairs made a considerable impact on the masses and the frequent riots in the thirties between Hindus and Muslims had fewer religious causes than economic ones. The Report of the Dacca Disturbances Enquiry Committee showed the main cause of the disturbance as an economic one, cultivators being at feud with their landlords, debtors with their *mahajans*.¹²⁷ In East Bengal jute cultivators were mainly Muslims and jute mills were owned by

British capitalists. Marwari and other Hindu agents supplied jute to the mills and made huge profits as intermediaries. The world-wide slump in 1929-30 lowered jute prices to such a level as to make the cultivators starve. It was well nigh impossible for the peasants to pay due rents, and whenever the landlords pressed for realisation there was a communal riot. The situation was too tense for an understanding between the communities, aggravated as it was further by adventurers gambling on these economic issues.

The Muslims were fortunate in having leaders with practical sense. They understood the demands of their community and made political bargains benefitting their masses. "Employment under the Government was the main yardstick of a person's or community's or caste's degree of advance and of social justice"—a very correct and just appreciation of the feelings of the Indian society by Durga Das.¹²⁸ Muslim leaders were trying to get as many jobs as possible for their community, offering new openings for the henceforth backward Muslims. The issue of separate electorates however had created a division among Muslim leaders. The Bengal Presidency Muslim League was against separate electorates and reserved seats, and in this respect stood apart from the parent body, viz, the All-India Muslim League. Nevertheless, the majority among that community in the province preferred separate electorates. The Bengal Muslim Conference with Ghuznavi as President, demanded that the ratio of Muslim population (54·85%) should be represented in the Bengal Council.¹²⁹ At the Unity Conference that met at Allahabad in November, 1932, Hindu leaders gave partial assent to Muslim demands in this regard. It was resolved there that in Bengal and Punjab Muslims should have 51 percent of the seats and for the next ten years joint electorates would be promulgated in all provinces.

The bureaucracy scattered the seeds of contention

destroying the faintest hope of Hindu-Muslim solidarity. The Government of India's announcement on the representation of the communities in central services added fuel to fire. The Hindus watched in utter despair that the new constitution afforded to the Muslims all opportunities of political advancement, and their bitterness grew in volume at the useless talks and arguments of the leaders of their own community, while Muslims enjoyed the weight of their numerical superiority along with reserved seats and other privileges on the plea of backwardness.

Fazlul Huq and Communalism

Abul Kasem Fazlul Huq is, like Gandhi, a controversial character. The most popular and venerated Muslim leader in Bengal, he could not adjust himself with the all-India Muslim leadership. Markedly sympathetic to the rural masses, he was not devoid of backing from the Muslim propertied and professional classes in Calcutta. He devoted his life to the uplift of the Muslim society in general, for better educational and service facilities for them, and at the same time, for the relief of the peasantry from the burden of indebtedness. Nevertheless, Hindu politicians and laymen, who had come into his direct contact would not characterise him as communal. On the other hand, Fazlul Huq is still living in the memories of his 'junior contemporaries as a man with such magnanimity as comparable to that of Deshabandhu only. Put in a nutshell, the formulation of Huq's leadership was thus: "Huq entered the Bengal Legislative Council as a critic of the older Muslim leadership. Wary of Congress, he nevertheless, moved towards a more extreme political stance akin to nationalist opinion as he grew increasingly critical of the conservative politics of Dacca and Nawab Choudhury. He represented a new kind of leader within the Muslim community. Although born

into a minor *Ashraf* family, and related by marriage to other prominent *Ashraf* families, his influence was not locally based on landownership and family patronage but rather on charisma and his grasp of mass agitational politics. Unlike many of the Muslim leaders with an *Ashraf* background, Huq realised the potential of mass support and found the Muslim petty merchants and artisans of Calcutta ideal materials... Huq's home-town of Barisal provided him with a life long base of support, but between 1918-47 his main center of activity was Calcutta."¹³⁰

That was almost a virgin soil, untouched by the elitist politicians, where Fazlul Huq showed his organising genius. It was the peasant mass who was practically never approached. As per routine resolutions were passed in the Congress and Communist Party meetings, and volunteers of both parties reached the villages to convene meetings and spread the story of how the villagers were being exploited. They were made to learn that they needed organisation. But still, there was a communication gap between the speaker and the listener. In Huq the peasant masses found the leader who could feel their pulses. Though brought up in the sophisticated atmosphere of the Calcutta Presidency College, he did not forget the rural past of his childhood. He undertook to ameliorate the condition of the peasantry who formed the bulk of Muslim population of Bengal. In this regard, he came into conflict with Jinnah who was basically an intellectual leader, having hardly any hold over the masses. "I do not believe in working up mob hysteria", Jinnah had said in 1920, and parted company with the Congress when Gandhi's leadership gave that body a mass-base. "Politics is a gentleman's game"—was his firm belief. Obviously, his and Huq's policies could not meet and Jinnah's attempts in 1936 produced only a "bubble of Muslim solidarity".

Fazlul walked out with all the members of his Proja Party from the Muslim League Parliamentary Board meeting. "All talks of Muslim unity and solidarity for merely political ends are worse than useless", said he, after breaking away from Jinnah, "when it is remembered that the Muslim cultivating classes constitute more than 90 percent of the total Muslim population of Bengal, and it is therefore their interest which must be fundamental in any scheme we may lay down for ourselves, or for the sake of any ideal which we may seek to achieve."¹³¹ The agriculturists had never had so sympathetic a leader. Huq scored an easy boundary by demanding the annulment of the Permanent Settlement through the Krishak Proja Party's election manifesto, which the Congress Party had never dared to do.

In All India Muslim leadership Muhammad Ali Jinnah had maintained a nationalist attitude till 1936. "I am a nationalist first, a nationalist second and a nationalist last," he had declared in the Legislative Assembly in 1925. To keep his word he did not cooperate with the Muslim delegates at the Round Table Conference. But in 1936 his changeover was dramatic. Probably he was afraid of losing his public image among the people of his own community who were growing conscious of their communal identity day by day. In the 1937 elections Jinnah chose to join the provocatively communal Muslim League and drew up a purely communal programme. His new move inevitably led to a rupture in his relations with the Congress, but did not provide a meeting ground with Huq. A very interesting point to note was that both factions were fed on the Aga Khan's money. However, Huq defended his action in the Muslim League Parliamentary Board meetings accusing the 'big people' in the League of making it impossible to place the Proja Party's viewpoint. "From this day onwards" he proceeded, "begins the grim fight between zamindars and

capitalists on one side and poor people on the other. It is not at all a civil war in the Muslim community, but it is a fight in which the people of Bengal are divided on a purely economic issue." He made a show of his earnestness, as a modern writer thought,¹³² by asking the Nawab of Dacca, Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin, Nawab Farouqui and other zamindar members of the League Parliamentary Board to abolish customs like '*nazrana*', and '*salami*' in their own *taluks*, which he argued, needed no legislation. In Krishak samiti meetings he condemned the zamindari system and demanded its abolition. The Government went so far as to believe that he was instigating non-payment of arrears by *rayats*.¹³³ However, Muslim communalism went on in a spree of violence while Hindu moneylenders were victims of *krishak samiti* hooliganism.¹³⁴

Sandwiched between Government unkindliness and Muslim demands, the Hindus in Bengal were losing their strength as well as position, and the mandates of the National Congress added insult to their injury. The Communal Award continued to be condemned in Bengal. The BPCC Executive Committee Chairman Sarat C. Bose decided to boycott the Award at a meeting held on 2 September, 1936.¹³⁵ Although Bengali public opinion was for Sarat Bose, the AICC President, Jawahrlal criticised his move which was not liked in Bengal. It was grievously believed that the national organ lacked the insight to probe into the problems that were Bengal's own. In November, Jawaharlal visited Calcutta and arrived at a sort of understanding with the provincial leaders.

With the promulgation of the Government of India Act in 1935, India was preparing for a new fight with the bureaucracy. Unlike the Mont Ford Constitution, the Act of 1935 was well-received in the Congress circle as Gandhi was for working the Scheme.¹³⁶ Instead of boycotting the

Legislatures, as was done previously, Congress leaders stood for election in the Central and Provincial Legislatures. They won in six provinces. In Bengal the Congress did not get the required majority. The Communal Award had allocated such percentages of representation that neither the Hindus, nor the Muslims could get an absolute majority in the Bengal Council. The bureaucracy liked to see the Hindu middle class losing grounds, not however 'allowing the growth of a new belligerent in the Muslims. So under cover of a foster-child treatment, the bureaucrats did not allow the Muslims to rule Bengal independent of the Europeans. Congressmen in Bengal were not allowed by the High Command to form coalition with Fazlul Huq's Proja Party, although under similar conditions Assam congressmen were permitted to form a coalition ministry. The result of the Congress mandate was disastrous for Bengal. Bengali nationalists lost the last chance of getting control over the administration, which might have enabled them to lessen the communal tension in the province.

Congress on the Defensive

Fazlul Huq's communalism was blended with parochialism—his political ideas hardly rose above his province and his community. Before the 1937 elections Jinnah ventured on formulating a united Muslim Party to stand against the Congress, but Fazlul Huq in a statement expressed his unwillingness to join the party. The government went as far as to predict that Huq would rather join the Hindu revolutionaries than come to an understanding with his own community leaders.¹³¹ For the Congress in Bengal, which had lost much of its weight and importance to all sections of its people, Fazlul Huq's move had provided a golden opportunity to revitalise itself. Probably Congress leaders of the province also had devised such a plan. The govern-

ment reported that Huq was promised a lakh of rupees from the Congress fund and on that strength he refused to accept Jinnah's alliance.¹³⁸ The hold of Huq over the Muslim peasant masses of Bengal was well-known and his alliance with the Congress would have carried the province by long strides forward, towards Communal amity. But as it was in the non-ratification of Deshbandu's Bengal Pact and forcing instead the Communal Award and the Poona Pact, the Congress repeated its great political blunder by disallowing Congress members of Bengal to coalesce with Huq. Huq was forced in the circumstances to ally with Jinnah,¹³⁹ whom he had so long refused. Jinnah immediately utilised the situation by inducting Huq as member of all the important committees of the All India Muslim League, and using Huq as the medium, developed the League into a powerful organisation in Bengal.

What logic prevented the Congress High Command to permit the alliance of the Congress with Huq in Bengal, is difficult to follow. The Krishak Proja Party of Huq, whatever its name stood for, was not entirely formed of peasants. Huq could not give effect to his lavish promises like the abolition of the Permanent Settlement, because added to other difficulties was the fact that *jotedars* and small landholders held important positions in his party. He formed a Debt Conciliatory Board which, according to the government did not function satisfactorily.¹⁴⁰ True, the amended Tenancy Act of 1937-38 gave some rights to the *rayats*, but there was if at all, slight amelioration of their financial wretchedness. Under similar conditions the Congress Ministry in U. P. also could not carry out the agrarian programme promised during election campaigns. The refusal of the Congress to allow Congress-Proja coalition gave the Muslim League the coveted footing among Bengal's Muslim peasantry. The League was not only bitterly communal, but

being led by non-Bengali Muslims, had no sympathy for, nor any understanding of the Bengal situation. Huq formed a coalition Ministry with the League on an ill-fated day.

Formation of Ministries fanned the flame of bitterness. Jinnah proclaimed the Congress to be his enemy. In the Lucknow session of the League in October, 1937, he declared the Congress to be a Hindu body, striving to get Hindusthan for the Hindus. He even challenged Gandhi's bonafide as a peacemaker in communal questions: "As to reserving you as a 'bridge' and peace-maker, don't you think your complete silence for all these months identified you with the congress leadership, although I know you are not even a four-anna member of that body?"¹⁴¹ Jinnah and Huq engaged themselves wholeheartedly in witchhunting the Congress, Jinnah preparing a list of 'atrocities committed on Muslims in Congress Provinces', and Huq going a step further declaring that he would retaliate in Bengal.¹⁴² Although the government attached little importance to Huq's declaration as he was "not the kind of person to attempt to carry such threats into practice", his threats alarmed the Indian communities. The Hindus in Bengal took up the challenge and "all the resources of the Congress in Bengal, including the press", reported the Bengal Governor, "were being employed to poison the atmosphere against the Ministry."¹⁴³ Acceptance of salaries by Muslim Ministers, in contravention of their election pledges provided a situation for the Congress to revive and extend their mass contact programme among the Muslim peasantry with the pointer of hypocrisy of the leaders in the Ministry. In the Kishoreganj sub-division of Mymensingh district, Congress agitation denouncing Muslim M. L. C.s and Ministers and the response of the public thereto attracted the notice of the government. Congress labour M. L. C.s held well-attended meetings in various jute mill areas and stigmatised the

Ministry's inability to recognise the difficulties of the working class.¹⁴⁴ The Chief Minister himself, who still held a sound footing among the rural masses, undertook to clear all misconceptions about the Ministry. The main burden of his speeches was to restore their faith by referring to the amended Tenancy Act and the work of the Co-operative Credit Societies. To the people of Dacca district he promised to introduce free primary education as soon as possible.¹⁴⁵ Mutual hatred, distrust and jealousy among the communities cast such a gloom over Bengal that no way of normalising the relations were visible. The Congress attempt to dampen tension by singing only two stanzas of the song *Bande Mataram* (which had always been a point of dispute) did not meet with the desired result. On the Christmas Day in 1937, poet Tagore published an appeal to the press deploring the constant flow of calumny, vilification and mutual revilement.

The Muslims got the chance of a lifetime to get into power. They seemed less worried therefore to ease the tension than to seize the communal gains. In one case relating to 15 appointments in the Co-operative Department, the Chief Minister with his Cabinet finalised the ratio as 45 percent Muslims, 15 percent Scheduled Castes and 5 percent minor minorities. The Ministry also decided to reserve 45 percent of the appointments in the Subordinate judicial service for Muslims.¹⁴⁶ The proposal of the Secondary Education Bill for the formation of a Secondary Education Board with statutory Muslim representation, evoked strong criticisms from the other community. This was of course, a deliberate attempt on the part of the Muslims to remove the control of secondary education and the high schools from the control of the Calcutta University which had been a stronghold of the Hindus. Naturally the Bill received support of the Muslim press. The issues in dispute thus

gathered in volume and the poet's appeals seemed to have fallen on deaf ears. There was no sign of any restraint in mutual acrimonious propaganda. Huq blamed the Hindu press for opposing him on communal grounds. "The more effective the campaign of personal propaganda by Muslim Ministers in the rural areas," commented the Governor of Bengal, "the more virulent are the press attacks upon them—a situation that is perhaps natural when one side controls the Press and other can only use the weapon of platform oratory to the masses or at public meetings, largely Muslim in composition."¹⁴⁷ The war carried on in the press and the platform sometimes led to physical violence. Meetings of Muslim cultivators organised and addressed by congressmen like Sasanka Sekhar Sanyal and Khan Bahadur Ekramul Huq, were disrupted by Muslim League members. Even the Congress President, Subhas Bose was a victim of communal hooliganism. During a tour in the Chittagong Division in 1938, Bose was physically assaulted by fanatical Muslim League supporters. He was shown a leaflet which alleged that the Congress was in a conspiracy to enslave the nine crores of Muslims and that in all Congress-administered provinces the life, property, religion and honour of the Muslims were in jeopardy.¹⁴⁸

It was most unfortunate that the leaders, instead of trying to cool down the tension, engaged themselves in useless charges and counter-charges. Against the Muslim fabrication that the Bengal Tenancy Act Amendment Bill could not be passed because of Congress opposition, Bose pointed out the truth and accused the Ministry as spineless: "If they (Bengal Ministers) had the manliness which the Congress Ministries in U. P., Bihar and Orissa had demonstrated, then surely the Bengal Governor would not dare to veto the Bill."¹⁴⁹ The Muslim League betrayed even more hatred and rancour in unravelling a supposed conspiracy: "The Government of

India and the Congress under the inspiration of Mr. Gandhi had entered into a secret agreement", said Maulana Hasrat Mohani, once an ardent Congressman, "the terms of which were, (i) that the Congress gives up the goal of complete independence and the idea of seceding from the British Empire and the method of revolutionary action in the attainment of that ideal, and (ii) that the Government of India in return for this has to give full power and freedom to the Congress in all matters which fall below the standards of complete independence."¹⁵⁰

Admittedly, this was a malevolent propaganda, but where was the clarion call of the Congress for an all out revolution against British imperialism? The revolutionary Congress had degenerated into an organ of political intrigues for sharing the spoils of power and office. In Bengal the masses were completely alienated from the Congress—one section by the Communists and another by the communalists. The Muslim League on the other hand gradually consolidated its hold urging the Muslims to organise in self-defence. Early in 1938 the government reported about mounting activities of the Muslim League. Muslims in the Murshidabad district were joining in numbers to the branch organisations of the League set up there by Maulavi Abdul Bari. In Tripura the Congress under Maulavi Asimuddin and Kamini Kumar Datta, was struggling hard for maintaining its influence over the agricultural population, against the increasing domination of the League. At Comilla Muslim League processionists burnt an effigy of the Sri and Lotus, the debated emblem of the Calcutta University, together with some passages from the *Anandamath*.¹⁵¹ In Chittagong, Noakhali and Tripura Muslims abstained from receptions given to the BPCC President Subhas Bose.¹⁵² While Bari was busy in holding meetings of cultivators in Murshidabad district, explaining to them the achievements of the

Ministry, new branches of the League were being established at Comilla and various parts of the Tripura district. A total of all these activities was enough to erode all Congress influence among the Muslim masses in the districts. The Congress had formed a Student League at Murshidabad for enrolling peasants in the Congress register, but it failed to achieve any marked success. The Muslim League session at Calcutta in April, 1938, added to the pace of the League's success. "For the time being at any rate it will certainly have the effect of greater cohesion among the Muslims of Bengal", commented the Governor of the Province. "The Muslim Ministers talk of making the League all powerful in the Bengal Muslim world. They also feel that as the League grows in strength so will the Proja Party gradually dwindle because membership of the former will mean much more than membership of the latter ; they also see in the growth of the Muslim League their only weapon against the mass contact policy of the Congress which they regard as most dangerous from a Muslim, and indeed, from an All-India point of view."¹⁵³ Muslim leaders proved themselves far more calculating and diplomatic than Congress leadership, whose complacency deserved no excuse. They kept themselves otherwise absorbed in factional squabbles for power in the Congress machinery while the alliance achieved through the non-cooperation and Khilafat movements, as indispensable to the nationalist cause, gradually frittered away and augmented the strength of communalism, that again, to strengthen the hands of the bureaucracy. The political blunder committed by the AICC, by refusing the willing hands of Fazlul Huq, surpassed the 'Himalayan miscalculations' of the Father of the Nation. However, thoroughly frustrated and disgusted, the Hindu Press in Bengal carried on propaganda against that man friendship with whom could have ushered in a brighter future, "in the worst possible taste and disgus-

ting insults". The *Ananda Bazar Patrika* referred to Fazlul Huq as a "raving mad man" and "the Mad Mollah of Bengal".¹⁵⁴

Bengal had no more reliance on Gandhi. He was represented as "an unrealistic negotiator in communal matters, and should have nothing to do with any future communal settlement."¹⁵⁵ For Bengali Hindus it came to be a struggle for existence as Hindus and they were inevitably led to communalism of their own. Under almost similar situations in 1923 *Suddhi* and *Sangathan* movements had established themselves in the city of Calcutta through the patronage of Hindu landowners in the mofussil and the up-country Hindus and Marwaris of Calcutta. The *Arya Samaj* and the *Hindu Dharma Sudharak Samiti* had also their patrons. All these organisations conjoined to counteract Gandhi in Bengal and took up the task of protecting Hindu interests against Muslim demands and atrocities. Within the thirties the adherents of the Hindu Mahasabha swelled in number. There was "an increasing insistence on the part of the Hindus upon the fact that the Congress is not a suitable representative of their communal interests", the government noted, and a growing demand that the Hindu Mahasabha must be a party to any communal settlement particularly as regards Bengal."¹⁵⁶ The Bengali Hindus were losing everything in their own homeland. The prestigious position they had so long enjoyed in Indian society, was in jeopardy. The naked communalism of the party in power made them ineligible for any opening. "At a time, when the respective claims of Congress and non-Congress Government in this country are being weighed in the balance, it is interesting to find that the Bengal Government has just announced the award of three overseas scholarships, of which two are to be reserved for Muslim and one for the Scheduled Caste candidates", wrote an aggrieved correspon-

dent. "This decision perpetuates the injustice done to Bengali Hindus for another year."¹⁵⁷ Such cases of favouritism were frequently flashed in the Hindu Press. Dr. Syamaprasad Mukherjee, the Hindu Mahasabha leader complained that Hindus were being deprived of their civil rights, and restrictions were being placed on the practice of ceremonies associated with their religion. "Though not a single Muslim candidate applied for a Physiology Professorship", alleged Dr. Mukherjee, "Mr. Fazlul Huq was still not inclined to give the post to a Hindu and wanted to bring a Muslim from the far-off Punjab to fill the vacancy."¹⁵⁸ The percentage of Hindu and Muslims in the Bengal Civil Service was 28 : 28, but "not more than fourteen Muslims have secured the passmark", informed a journalist, "and therefore the Ministry is trying to lower the minimum qualification and there is a tug of war between the Ministry and the Public Service Commission."¹⁵⁹

The frustration of the Bengali middle-class Hindu drove him a long way away from the Congress. The situation thus took a relieving turn to the British who had become involved in a war with Germany. Hindu-Muslim differences, that undermined the solidarity and strength of the Congress, not only alienating the Muslim members but also the frustrated Hindu members and gave the British a breathing time in India. The bureaucrats toned up the situation in their own interest. "It is, however, most important from the Bengal point of view that Muslims should not feel that any less attention is being given to them and to their viewpoint", wrote the officiating Governor of Bengal to the Viceroy. "I have thought of asking your permission to use our censorship", he continued, "in order to ensure greater prominence in the local Press for the discussion between yourself and the Muslim League leaders."¹⁶⁰ The Government was particularly happy when the news of the Viceroy's intention

to see Jinnah was published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. The Viceroy's meeting with Bengali Muslim leaders, Fazlul Huq, Nazimuddin and Suhrawardy, was sure to bring about the wholehearted support of this community for British war efforts.

By 1940 the Congress lost all importance in Bengal, among both the Hindus and Muslims. In vain did Gandhi try to justify his and the Working Committee's stand on the Communal Award. "During my brief stay in Bengal", he wrote, "I have been overwhelmed with questions on the communal decision. I have been told that neither the Working Committee nor I have pronounced decisive opinion. There can be neither acceptance nor rejection", he argued, "of an imposed thing. The Working Committee has therefore as much accepted and as much rejected the decision as Bengal has. There is this difference, however, that the Working Committee has not agitated against it like Bengal."¹⁶¹ He, as usual, urged for patient endeavour, for which Bengal could not care less. It was most unfortunate that the Congress would still build castles in the air pretending to be the only nationalist organisation in the country. The Muslim League had successfully assembled the Muslims under its banner, while the Hindus also in large numbers, were rallying round the Hindu Mahasabha. The actual place held by the Congress in the Indian body politic raised a controversy between Jawaharlal and Jinnah in 1938. While the latter claimed for the Muslim League equal footing with the Congress as representatives of the two communities respectively, Jawaharlal characterised the League as one of many organisations of the Indian Muslims. When Jawaharlal's stand was that there were only two forces at work, namely, the British and the Congress, Jinnah repudiated it and claimed that the forces numbered four,—the British, the Princes, the Hindus, and the Muslims.¹⁶² The

Congress slipped from its stand for afterwards it tacitly recognised Jinnah's claim by agreeing to take part in the Round Table Conference where the Muslims were invited to send separate representatives

For two decades Gandhi tried in vain to bring about a 'change of heart' in the Muslim community by a patient grant of generosity on the part of the Hindus. What with countless speeches and appeals, religious concessions and temporal sanctions the Muslims did not swerve from the path laid down by Sir Syed Ahmed. They remained where they were before 1920, and from about the middle of the 1920s, the Hindus began to grow more Hindu. They began to realise that their generosity, based on the urge for national independence, was being exploited by both the Muslims and the government, and so they decided to assert their own rights. Bengal's political history in the following decades of the non-cooperation movement is hardly anything more than a history of communal relations in the province, each of the communities striving to realise its own interests at the cost of the other. During the first few years, the Hindus were on the ascendant and the Muslim cry was that they were being deprived; in the late thirties the tables turned and the burden of Hindu press and platform propaganda was that their existence was at stake. Gandhi's appeals for unity failed to find any response from any quarters in Bengal. The Bengal revolutionaries were successful in maintaining the faith that use of violence was inevitable in a fight. Now that Hindu-Muslim tension in the province was heading towards a crisis, Hindu Mahasabha leaders pleaded for violence. At the Bengal Provincial Hindu Mahasabha meeting Shyamaprasad Mukherjee urged that the Hindus should achieve their ends by fair means or foul, and that the cult of non-violence would not weigh with them. He declared that he would allow no peace in the province

until the Communal Award was annulled. He also accused the Bengal Ministry of oppression of Hindus in districts and failure to protect Hindu women in rural areas.¹⁶³ "The success of the Conference and the widespread sympathy which it evoked from Hindu professional and middle classes in Bengal are significant", noted the Bengal Governor, "of the resentment which the average Bengali Hindu feels against the neutral policy of the Congress as regards the Communal Award."¹⁶⁴ The prestige of the Congress went down to such a level that when the resignation of Nalini Ranjan Sarkar¹⁶⁵ from the Ministry necessitated Huq to find out a new ally, he preferred the Hindu Mahasabha to the Congress "to strike a bargain on behalf of the Hindus."¹⁶⁶ Gandhi's communal policy wrecked Bengal's political integrity for ever, and brought contempt on his own self and the Congress from both the Hindus and Muslims alike of the province. If the Communal Award robbed the Hindus of their weight in the Bengal Legislature, the Poona Pact further curtailed it by allowing unwarranted privileges to the Scheduled Castes. The *Namasudra* community of Bengal was made to believe that the caste Hindus were their rivals, and the communal problem took a new turn by its escalation in the Hindu society itself. The situation posed favourably for Jinnah. "Hindus are deprived of all power", wrote the aggrieved Jayakar, "owing to the foolish action of the Congress High command...Jinnah has now assumed the pose of a liberator of all the minorities of India."¹⁶⁷ Earlier, he had made Gandhi responsible for the deteriorating communal relations which was more or less an outcome of Jinnah's obstinacy. "Gandhi may feel bitter about Jinnah", wrote Jayakar, "but he fails to realise that Jinnah is a Frankenstein raised exclusively by the Mahatma's mantras, whom he has no power to lay."¹⁶⁸ Under the Mahatma's guidance the Congress followed a policy that completed the

bifurcation of the Indian nation, begun by the Imperialists. Poor Bengal remained a pawn in the hands of the all-India leadership, that sliced and sold to the communalists a part of her body, which she had resisted so heroically before Gandhi came to hold the reins of the national struggle.

6. The Rebel President

The storm that was gathering in Bengal since 1921, gained cyclonic momentum during the thirties and burst on the question of presidential election on the eve of the Tripuri session of the Congress in March, 1939. The hero of this phase of Bengal's struggle against Gandhian leadership of the Indian National Congress was Subhas Chandra Bose, a scion of a well-to-do *Kayastha* family and a brilliant alumnus of the Calcutta University. He joined the Indian National Congress in his early twenties, when the organisation had just come under Gandhi's leadership. For two decades he played a leading part in the national independence movement under Gandhi's guidance, remaining at the same time a relentless critic of the leader's policy and programme. He had vital differences with Gandhi over the social and economic reorganisation of India, the foundations of the constitution of free India and India's relation with the belligerents of the Second World War. These fundamental ideological differences developed opposite viewpoints over every step to be taken by the Congress and reached a climax in 1939, after which Bose had to leave the Congress and shortly afterwards, flee the country also, providing Gandhi and his followers a free hand in piloting the national struggle in the direction they liked.

Bose joins the Congress :

After graduating from the Calcutta University, Bose passed the Indian Civil Service Examination in England to fulfil his parents' wishes. But "finding that it would be impossible to serve both masters at the same time", namely, the British government and his mother land,¹ he decided in

favour of the latter. In May, 1921 he bartered the cosy, comfortable and covetable life of a civilian for the struggling life of a revolutionary. Returning from Cambridge, Bose landed at Bombay and went straight to see Gandhi for having a clear knowledge of the war the leader proposed to wage against the 'Satanic' British Raj in India. The first interview was to some extent disappointing to the young enthusiast. As regards his first question, if the different activities conducted by the Congress were going to culminate in the last stage of the campaign in, say, non-payment of taxes, the answer was positive and convincing; but the second and third questions, viz., how mere non-payment of taxes would force the Government to retire from the field, and, how could Gandhi promise *Swaraj* within one year, remained almost unanswered. The "deplorable lack of clarity in the plan"² disheartened the newcomer.

Coming to Calcutta Bose found a leader in C. R. Das and at his behest threw himself into the non-cooperation movement. Before leaving Cambridge Bose wrote two letters to Das informing him of his own determination to give up the service, alongwith a request to grant him a place in the national work programme either as a teacher in the National College, or as a journalist, or anything else that he was capable of doing.³ Das in reply accorded him a hearty welcome as he said, he suffered from the dearth of sincere workers and the young man felt convinced of a befitting work awaiting him.⁴

Although Leonard A. Gordon believes that Bose's interpretation of his first interview with Gandhi was the outcome of later reflections,⁵ the impact of the incident cannot be minimised. Even before meeting Gandhi or joining the national movement, Bose had formed a clear vision of the ultimate goal and had chalked out a plan of work. His letter from Cambridge to Das reflected his ideas about

the steps the Congress should take to lead the nation towards attainment of freedom. He was keen that the Congress should be clear about its policies relating to currency and exchange, the native states, franchise, and the treatment of the depressed classes. He suggested that the Congress should maintain a permanent staff of research workers on every individual problem, who should collect up-to-date facts and figures and thus enable the Congress to understand the situation and take necessary steps there on. That would necessitate, he urged, permanent quarters and a permanent meeting place for the Congress. He further suggested the opening of an Intelligence Department, and a Propaganda Department for publishing booklets in every provincial language on Congress work for free distribution among the public. About labour, factory-legislation, vagrancy and poor relief, he wanted the Congress to adopt definite policies. Above all he suggested the immediate framing of an Indian Constitution and because, in his view, the Congress-League scheme of 1917 was entirely out of date, the Constitution must be framed on the basis of *Swaraj*.⁶ It was on the interpretation of *Swaraj* that Bose and Gandhi held diametrically opposite views and that difference brought them to lead two opposite camps in the Congress.

A man avid for practical idealism, Subhas was bound to be disappointed with Gandhi who liked to compare himself to a man driving his car through fog and taking directions only as far as vision in the fog allowed. By contrast Das possessed a pragmatic bent of mind and Bose therefore became his disciple as much for his colossal sacrifice as for his hardheadedness.⁷ Although the intimacy between them was snapped by Das's premature death in June, 1925, the '*Guru*' left a permanent mark on the political views of the follower.

Within a week of his arrival at Calcutta, Bose was appointed Secretary of the Publicity Board under the BPCC Executive Committee. In his capacity as the Publicity officer Bose received commendations even from *The Statesman*, which remarked that "in as much the Congress secured such an able man, the government had in proportion lost a competent officer."⁸ His organisation of the 17 November *hartal* brought him praise from all quarters. At the beginning of the year 1923 Deshbandhu challenged Gandhi's leadership by forming the Swaraj Party. Bose became his chief asset in the formation of the party, in campaigning for the elections, in fact, in every sphere of Das's political activities. Earlier both of them had resented the decree of Bardoli. As the Swarajists captured the BPCC Bose became the first among the second ranking leaders of Bengal. He showed his abilities as an organiser during a flood-relief operation in North Bengal, in the Tarakeswar *Satyagraha* against a corrupt priest, and in numerous labour movements.¹⁹ Obviously the government became apprehensive about him and tried to keep him out of mischief by holding him almost continuously in prison or in detention on the plea of his association with the revolutionaries.

The untimely death of Deshbandhu gave Gandhi a chance for building up a solid base for his leadership in Bengal. The vacuum in the leadership of Bengal was accentuated by the absence of Bose, who was serving a long term in the Mandalay prison. Gandhi rather too promptly recognised J. M. Sengupta as Das's successor as the BPCC President, as the leader of the Bengal Congress Legislature party, as well as the Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation. Sengupta however had not the experience nor the hold of Das and so it would have been better for Gandhi had the responsibilities been divided among Das's other lieutenants. The decision was resented by Subhas Bose's elder brother

Sarat C. Bose who, although not fully occupied in politics, played a prominent role in the BPCC. "Personally I think it is a great mistake to put any other man into all the places filled by the Deshbandhu"—he wrote to his brother at Mandalay.¹⁰ In general, the choice was not well received in Bengal. "Will Mr. Sengupta do justice to the position if he is appointed Mayor?"—asked an influential daily. "He is thrust into an office with the duties of which he is wholly unfamiliar. He has not been within miles of the Calcutta Municipal office in his life. He has given no evidence that he takes any interest in municipal work, and for him to be Mayor of the greatest Corporation in the Indian Empire would be a piece of outrage upon public sense. With regard to his leadership of the Bengal Legislative Council and of the Congress Committee," the paper continued to show its disapproval, "it is impossible to speak with anything like confidence, for with a certain wing of the Swaraj Party Mr. Sengupta is not a favourite. The Swarajist Councillors of the Corporation will have now no option but to carry out the fiat of the great Mahatma."¹¹ For Gandhi, this move was certainly inexcusable. Why was he in such a hurry to place all responsibilities on a single head who did not command any appreciable hold or influence over the people of the province? Gandhi's excuse was only one and that of unity—that unity of purpose and action which would strengthen the party. But other forces too, might have played their part in the decision. Gandhi was facing the obstinate opposition of Bengal since September, 1920. The activities of the late Deshabandhu made it impossible for Gandhi to build up a strong base there. On Das's death he readily chose one who would have to depend on Gandhi's support, as the new leader lacked any consolidated base of power in his own province. Possibly this was the way through which Gandhi expected to drag Bengal under his monolithic leader-

ship. During Bose's absence, Sengupta and then Sasmal led the BPCC. But after his release in November, 1927, Bose was unanimously elected as the President of the Provincial Committee. This event marked the beginning of a long-standing feud between the Congress High Command and the BPCC, the immediate issue being what would be the goal of the Indian National Congress. In the absence of Das, the Swaraj Party had not its former solidarity and coherence and that gave Gandhi an easy handle to lead the Congress in the way he liked, but the young President of the BPCC was equal to the occasion and would not let his province go astray. Being the favourite of the radicals and the youth all over India, he carried on incessant struggle against the groping ways of Gandhi.

The meaning of Swaraj

At the end of the year 1927, the Congress, at its annual session at Madras, declared complete independence as the goal of the Indian national movement. Immediately after the session was over, Gandhi declared that the resolution "had been hastily conceived and thoughtlessly passed"¹² In fact, he was defending the goal of Dominion Status since December, 1921, when Hasrat Mohani had sought to move a similar resolution at the Ahmedabad Congress. Gandhi's bid for Congress unity led him to make mercurial interpretations of *Swaraj*. Not that he never yielded to the younger group, but he preferred to keep the Liberals on his side and played on the standing tune of self-government within the British Empire.

In the language of R. C. Majúmdar, "like the pendulum of a clock Gandhi's interpretation of *Swaraj* was moving between Dominion Status and Complete Independence,"¹³ While a modern writer characterises it as Gandhi's duplicity: "The different needs of Indians impelled Gandhi into a

position of particular leverage. Gandhi was willing to play this lubricant role rather than break decisively with Liberals whose support would be influential in negotiation with the Government.”¹⁴ The year 1928 had a momentous beginning. In February the Simon Commission reached India. The Commission was appointed by the British Parliament to enquire into the demands of different sections of Indian body politic and to formulate a report on the basis of which administrative changes were to be promulgated in India. The Commission did not contain any Indian member and on that ground the Congress decided to boycott it. The arrival of the Commission was greeted by a nationwide *hartal*, organised by the AICC. To Subhas Bose, this was a momentous occasion for starting a civil-disobedience campaign throughout the country. It was also a year of industrial unrest. The wave of industrial strikes created unprecedented stir in the country. Bombay Textile mill-hands, numbering 1,50,000 went on striking for six consecutive months; workers’ strikes at Jamshedpur in the East Indian Railways, and in the jute mills of Bengal, coupled with scavengers’ and other municipal workers’ strike in Calcutta made the government panicky. The peasantry at Bardoli was going through a no-tax campaign. In short, there was trouble everywhere and to Bose it was an ideal situation for taking an all-out offensive against the British Raj. Bose earnestly believed that “if the Congress Working Committee had taken courage in both hands, they could have anticipated the movement of 1930 by two years, and the appointment of the Simon Commission could have been made the starting point of such a movement.”¹⁵ He went upto Sabarmati and begged Gandhi to give a lead but Gandhi declared that he had “no desire even now to interfere with the present evolution of the national movement except through occasional writings.”¹⁶

The Congress decided not to appear before the Simon Commission; but instead the Congress took upon itself the task of framing the Constitution. The question of the fundamental basis on which the Constitution was to be framed, viz., Complete Independence or Dominion Status, naturally arose and split the Congress camp. Needless to say, Bose and the younger group were for independence. In April, at the Bengal provincial conference at Basirhat he moved a resolution that was subsequently carried, suggesting that the "Conference proclaims Complete Independence as India's goal"; he further said that "it was no new thing in Bengal. Aurobindo had preached this message through the columns of his *Bandemataram*. It was a glory to Bengal that twenty years later it was carried by India in the Madras Congress."¹⁷ During the All Parties Conference at Lucknow in August, Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru decided to oppose the adoption of the Nehru Report which had prescribed Dominion Status as the basis of Indian Constitution. Lest the move did manifest to the bureaucracy the weakness of the Congress, they did voice their protest only, prevented thus a division of the House, and formed the Independence League for carrying on propaganda in support for independence.¹⁸ In these circumstances, the Nehru Committee, with Bose himself as a member, accepted Dominion Status to be the basis on which the Constitution of India was to be framed. But the preamble of the Report clearly testified that the Committee could not be unanimous on the question of the fundamental basis of the Constitution. Further, since it was "not a Committee of the Congress but that of the All Parties' Conference it had to proceed upon maximum agreement," Bose made no secret of his dissident view there. The All Parties Convention, that met at Calcutta in December, became the scene of heated debates on the same subject. Sengupta as a supporter of Gandhian views tried to justify

Dominion Status : "So far as I am concerned, I want a Constitution based on Independence. And I also believe that the adoption of Dominion Status in this connection does not in any way interfere with the ideals of those who believe in Independence."¹⁹ Srinivasa Iyenger read out a statement on behalf of the Independence Leaguers : "We have decided not to take any part in framing of the Constitution in so far as it commits us to the acceptance of Dominion Status. We shall neither move amendments nor vote on it, we propose to carry on in the Congress and in the country such activity as we consider proper and necessary in favour of Complete Independence."²⁰ Jitendra Lal Benerjee attacked some of the arguments in favour of Dominion Status. "The Government was not going to allow even Dominion Status without sufficient pressure and coercion from the nationalists' side," he said, "so why stop at Dominion Status leaving Independence?"²¹ The debate continued till the Congress met at Calcutta in December.

Gandhi's inertia became a constant source of disappointment for Bose. He was making efforts to arouse the leader to action by pricking. As Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Youth Congress held in December, 1928, he advocated "Activism as opposed to passivism which was being preached from Sabarmati Ashram of the Mahatma and Pondicherry Ashram of Sri Aurobindo". The Bose-Gandhi feud reached a climax during the Congress session at Calcutta at the end of the year. Gandhi refused to accept the compromise on which the Nehru Report was based, as he believed it was self-contradictory. He moved a new resolution which implied that if the British Government accepted the Nehru Constitution on or before 31st December, 1930, the Congress would adopt it and thereby commit itself definitely to Dominion Status. Ultimately the time schedule was amended to December, 1929 and in the words

of Bose it "only served to kill precious time". The one-year grace period was really a suicidal policy for the Congress as it gave the government ample opportunity for their preparation.²³ Bose immediately issued a statement to the Press declaring that "even if Dominion Status is conceded today, we cannot accept it as a fulfilment of our National demand. We stand for "Independence" not in the distant future to be, as our immediate objective. The cleavage between the two wings in the Congress is, therefore, fundamental". He further pointed out, "We shall not get even Dominion Status' however unanimous our demand may be, unless we are able to devise sanctions. The resolution does not mention any such sanction...unless the campaign of non-cooperation or some other effective sanction is resorted to at once, it is sure, as the Sun rises in the East, that our demand even for Dominion Status will be rejected with contempt by the British Government."²³ As later events showed, his judgment carried a large amount of truth. An amendment to Gandhi's resolution, to the effect that the Congress would be content in nothing short of independence, which implied severance of the British connection, was moved by Bose. Although two-thirds of the delegates from Bengal voted for it the amendment was lost by 975 for and 1350 votes against it. "But that vote could hardly be called a free one." wrote the indignant loser, "as the followers of Gandhi made it a question of confidence and gave out that if Gandhi was defeated he would retire from the Congress."²⁴ He also questioned if the Dominion Status Party sincerely believed that Dominion Status would be available within twelve months ; the answer was certainly in the negative, so why the delay of twelve months ?²⁵ "Why are we going to lower down the flag for these twelve months ?" The practical man in Bose made no more the mistake of 1921 and in 1928 his scepticism held ground. Gandhi, in an address meant

specially for young Bengal, asked to dismiss "the bogey of Independence vs. Dominion Status". He appealed to the sense of unity and said that the Nehru Report was a compromise, and "if that compromise was a tactical blunder that involved displeasure of some party, it should be their bounden duty to swallow that blunder and abide by that compromise."²⁰

Throughout 1928 Bose tried hard to push home to the Congress the goal of complete Independence, But everytime he was outmanoeuvred by Gandhi. Bose's propaganda was on such a scale that in January, 1929 the Bengal Government made it known to the Government of India that "Independence has ceased to be an academic ideal. We are faced now with a party who, it would seem, meant to translate it into a definite policy."²¹ During the Calcutta Congress Bose manifested his differences with the leader in another principle also. Although he had joined the non-violent Congress and fought with earnest zeal, he never lost contact with the Bengal revolutionaries. He was always in their good book as was evident during the BPCC controversy after the death of Das. Probably his belief in the necessity of an armed struggle during the last phase of India's bid for independence was never renounced. He endured the non-violent struggle only for setting the stage for the final showdown. Differences on this account were foredoomed to be more acute in the years to come, but in December 1928, he gave only a glimpse of his favour for militarism. He and Jatin Das, trained up bands of volunteers in military discipline. Although unarmed, they were drilled in the military fashion and dressed in paramilitary uniform. Later Gandhi betrayed his dislike of this Jatin Das by not uttering a single word in praise of his self-immolation by fast unto death in the prison. When, after the Calcutta Congress the mutual dislike of Bose and Gandhi stepped up, Bose took serious interest in the

training of the Bengal Volunteers. His paper *Liberty* published interesting notices for the trainees, such as: "All southerners are hereby directed to 'Fall in' in mufti today at 6. P. M. sharp at the National School ground to join the Lathi class"; or "All Northerners are hereby informed that the Platoon No. II, III are to 'Fall in' in Sraddhananda Park and No IV in the Cornwallis Park at 5-30 P. M. sharp."²⁸ All notices were served under the name of the G. O. C. Subhas C. Bose.

But Bose's seriousness could not move the leader and inspire him to take actions. In the *Young India* of 28 February, 1928, Gandhi wrote that India was not ready for any advance just as the British were still reluctant to budge²⁹. "The plain, painful fact of the matter is that today not to talk of one crore or volunteers", Gandhi gave his justification for not launching a movement, "there are not ten thousand who are prepared completely to sacrifice themselves for duty's sake . . . You cannot get Swaraj by mere speeches, shows, processions etc."³⁰ *Liberty* gallingly remarked that it failed to understand how the unprepared masses would be prepared by 1 January, 1930, the Mahatma's scheduled time.³¹ The editorials of *Liberty* conveyed criticisms of Gandhian methods almost daily. "There is not a single instance in history,"—said Ballabhbhai Patel as the President of the Tamil Nadu Provincial Conference, "of an unarmed nation winning its freedom through armed struggle." "If there is no instance in history of an unarmed nation winning its freedom through armed revolt", wrote *Liberty*, "it is equally true that there is no instance in history of unarmed nation winning freedom at all."³² Bengal Congress was a stronghold of the revolutionaries and Bose was their mouthpiece. Bengal's abiding faith on armed revolution was not shaken. Total severance of British connection

was the idea fostered and cherished in the hearts of the revolutionaries of Bengal.

Even though the unity of communities and of all political opinions including even the Liberals was acquired through the decision to boycott the Simon Commission and the consternation created by its appearance was at its peak, the fervour was allowed to subside as the leader could not see any light.²³ The BPCC, independent of the AICC, rather taking exception to its inactivity launched a campaign for the boycott of British goods under its rebel President. The most enthusiastic response came from the students and the youth of the country, influenced as they were by the Marxists who advocated complete secession from British domination. The first All Bengal Students' Conference was held at Calcutta in August, 1928, presided over by Jawaharlal and the All India Youth Congress was held at Calcutta, in December, 1928, presided over by K. F. Nariman, a Parsi radical of Bombay. These were signs that the country grew restive for active programme initiated by the Congress.

The independence resolution had been accepted by the Congress at Madras in Gandhi's absence. This session had taken another significant step in appointing Nehru junior, Subhas Bose and Shuaib Qureshi—all radicals and so-called Left-Wingers—as General Secretaries for the coming year. Gandhi was ill and could not attend all the meetings in Madras, and give his view. This might have accounted for the Congress taking such drastic steps. It was inspiring to the Congress members, particularly because it synchronised with the arrival of the Simon Commission. Gandhi, however, struck the anti-climax when he receded towards Dominion Status—in the following session at Calcutta. He had regained in the meantime his hold over the Congress with the

help of the older leaders, to whom neither the doctrine of socialism, nor the principle of mass organisation, let aside the goal of complete independence, as preached by the extremists in the Congress, had any appeal. But he failed to arrest the growth of restlessness among the youth. Throughout 1929 youth and student organisations grew up in Bengal and conferences were held in different districts of the province. Similar organisations were started by Bombay, Punjab, Central Provinces and Madras students and conferences were held at Poona, Ahmedabad, Lahore, Nagpur, Amraoti and in places all over India.³⁴

Gandhi was nonplussed. Added to the peoples' growing inclination towards the goal of independence, there was a strong undercurrent of revolutionary activity which did no less inspire the people. In the Lahore jail some of the political prisoners resorted to hunger-strike on the demand of a better treatment to political prisoners. The entire country seemed to join the hunger-strikers demanding that the government should remedy their just grievances and save their lives. Besides intensive press agitation and meetings and demonstrations of the public, the Swarajist members of the Legislative Assembly also demanded that the government should come to an immediate compromise at least to save the life of Jatin Das, who was on the verge of death. But the government did not yield and Jatin Das died the death of a martyr. As his body was removed from Lahore to Calcutta, thousands assembled at railway stations to pay their homage to the dead hero.³⁵ Gandhi must have sensed the signs of a coming upheaval in these incidents. All on a sudden, in the AICC meeting in July, 1929, he moved a resolution asking all Congress legislators to resign their posts. It met with such severe opposition—that it had to be shelved for discussion in the following Congress session at Lahore. But Gandhi's intention in moving such a resolution remained a

puzzle to many. In some quarters it was suspected that the resolution was framed with the acquiescence of Motilal who wanted to put up a united front against the growing strength of the Left-Wingers and thus placated Gandhi by agreeing to accept his pet theory of council—boycott.⁵⁶ The same reasons might have prevailed on Gandhi as well ; besides, by asking legislators to resign their seats he meant to hint at a coming struggle for which this would be a preparatory step. He was well aware that down-side of his unpopularity depended on his unwillingness to launch a struggle.

But Gandhi's manoeuvres did not stop here. By a brilliant ruse he took the wind out of the extremists' sail, by selecting Jawaharlal as the president of the annual session of the Congress at Lahore and thus winning over to his side a large section of the young Congressmen. Most of the provincial nominations for the Presidentship of the Lahore Congress were in favour of Gandhi and Sardar Patel.⁵⁷ Persuading Patel to withdraw his name, Gandhi himself withdrew his and nominated Jawaharlal. In the *Young India* he explained his reasons as : "The battle of the future has to be fought by younger men and women. Pandit Jawaharlal has everything to recommend him. He has for years discharged with singular ability and devotion the office of the Secretary of the Congress. By his bravery, determination and grit he has captivated the imagination of the youth of the land".⁵⁸ Gandhi correctly felt that Jawaharlal's elevation to the national throne was of vital necessity to him. He had therefore to persuade everybody, including the Nehrus themselves. To Motilal, who said Jawaharlal was too young to have the honour, he wrote : "Let youngmen have their innings. We must stand behind them."⁵⁹ After exchange of quite a number of letters and telegrams he succeeded to prevail upon the hesitant Jawaharlal. By placing Jawaharlal as the front-man of the national movement, Gandhi won the day. In the

younger circle of the Congress there was an insistence for nominating such a President as would reciprocate their viewpoints. By the selection of Jawaharlal, Gandhi by-passed the claims of the uncompromising Bengali leader without offending his followers. Gandhi's tactics proved very effective ; Jawaharlal gave up the demand for independence and joined the Gandhi camp.

Bose's indignation can easily be imagined. "Jawaharlal has now given up Independence at the instance of the Mahatma"—he complained.⁴⁰ Nehru of course, was wavering between the two extremes for some time. Following Lord Irwin's declaration on behalf of the British Parliament of a Round Table Conference between Indian and British politicians, Indian leaders met at Vithalbhai's residence at Delhi and issued a manifesto proclaiming that all discussions at the proposed conference would be on the basis of full Dominion Status for India. The manifesto was signed by Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Sapru, Besant and Ansari. Jawaharlal, Bose, Kitchlew and Abdul Bari declined to sign but Jawaharlal later succumbed to Gandhi's persuasions and put his signature there. "In fact, Jawaharlal had not changed his views," wrote his biographer, "but was persuaded to sign by appeals to his sense of discipline."⁴¹ Obviously, he did it most reluctantly and resigned both his membership and secretaryship of the Congress, even considered abdicating the Presidency.⁴² But Gandhi would not let him join the enemy camp, so he immediately revised the Delhi manifesto declaring that it was valid only till the next session of the Congress, and persuaded Nehru to withdraw his resignation.⁴³ Motilal soothed his son by urging that "the dustbin is the only safe place for the Delhi Statement."⁴⁴ Bose remained firm in his stand. In the Presidential address at the Midnapur Youth Conference in December, 1929, he said, "Mine is the ideal of a complete and unequivocal

freedom for the country—a new structure we shall have to raise on the sound basis of an all-embracing *Samyavada*, i. e., socio-political equality.”

“Those who know the relations that subsist between Jawaharlal and me,” said Gandhi, “know that his being in the chair is as good as my being in it.”⁴⁵ In fact, the Lahore Congress, which met under the presidency of Jawaharlal was virtually dictated by Gandhi. Although Jawaharlal made a very radical speech as the president, resolutions of the most reactionary character were passed in the session. Gopal has very rightly appraised Gandhi’s plan. “Jawaharlal was the best shield of the Congress against left-wing groups and organisations”, writes Nehru’s biographer : “Gandhi did not forget that the author of the radical address was also a signatory of the Delhi Manifesto.”⁴⁶ The Viceroy cut a sarcastic remark on Nehru for his dualism : “His heart is no doubt with the independence-men and ultra-extremists generally, but his reason tells him that his material interests and his political future depend, for the present at any rate, on his alliance with Gandhi.”⁴⁷ The Congress accepted Independence as its goal, but virtually no move was taken to achieve that goal. When Bose moved a resolution stating that in order to achieve complete Independence, the Congress should carry on ceaseless campaign in favour of independence, with a view to establishing a parallel government and launch the campaign of civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes and general strikes wherever possible, with a view to give effect to the above twofold programme the Congress should take up the task of organising peasants, workers, students and other oppressed sections of the Indian society,” he was defeated. Even Sengupta, who gave Bose his support during the Council-boycott resolution in July, now joined Gandhi. Gandhi did not prescribe any plan of action for the coming year.

Possibly he was thinking that India should get the right of self-determination through Round Table Conferences. On the other hand, he moved and ultimately passed a resolution congratulating the Viceroy for the latter's miraculous escape from the terrorists' bomb. He then purged the Congress executive of all socialist or left-wing elements, who dared to challenge his directives. The new AICC was formed without Bose, Srinivasa Iyenger and others of that group. "I can profit by criticism, never by praise,"⁴⁸ Gandhi said; but in actual field he would entertain no criticism whatever value it might possess.

Bose's defeats in the 1928-29 proceedings were well contrived. He was trying to lead the Congress away from Gandhi's aims. Under pretence of turning an "Independence-wallah" Gandhi was heart and soul for Dominion Status. As a veteran politician he was well aware that without a substantive pressure from the Congress, the Viceroy would not be so gracious as to make a present of independence. If so, it is beyond anybody's ken what prompted him to keep the Congress bereft of any sanction. If it was his unwillingness to embarrass the government, it would be seen how it was utterly impossible for him to come to terms with Subhas Bose whose plan was to sever all connections with the British empire.

The year 1929 passed off peacefully without any sign on the part of the government to accept the Nehru Constitution. Gandhi kept his promise and became an "Independence-wallah"; in the midnight of 31 December the young president of the Congress unfurled the tricolour flag on the bank of the Ravi. January 26 was celebrated by the nation as Independence Day. Mean-while, Gandhi was searching for an explanation that would appease the government without very much affecting his popularity among the Indian people. In the *Young India* of January 9, 1930, he wrote, "For the

Congress Dominion Status meant complete independence plus voluntary partnership with Britain."⁴⁰ India should repay her indebtedness to British rule by keeping within the empire. In the *Young India* of January 30, he gave a new interpretation of the of *Swaraj* by the term 'Substance of Independence'. The 'Eleven Points' which were components of 'Substance of Independence' explained what he actually meant by *Swaraj*. The vow of independence was likely to lead to a confrontation with the government which he did not approve just then. But his inconsistency made him the victim of adverse criticisms from his countrymen. He, of course, jovially faced them. "I must admit my many inconsistencies," he wrote. "But since I am called a Mahatma, I might well endorse Emerson's saying that foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." He justified his new interpretation in these words: "Mere withdrawal of the English is not Independence. By mentioning the eleven points I have given a body in part to the elusive word independence."⁴¹

By the beginning of the year 1930 the stage was set for the civil disobedience campaign. Congress legislators had resigned their seats as desired by Gandhi. He was vested with dictatorial powers by the AICC for conducting the campaign. Yet he stalled another chance to avoid the confrontation. On March 2 he sent a letter to the Viceroy stating that in the absence of any sympathetic reply from the government he would start civil disobedience ten days later.

As the government's reply exhibited utter indifference to Gandhi's ultimatum, Gandhi started the campaign with his chosen followers—all inmates of his *asrama*, who "submitted to its discipline and assimilated the spirit of its methods."⁴² His march for breaking the Salt Law switched on a nation-wide civil disobedience movement. The government retaliated by promptly arresting the leaders.

During the civil disobedience campaign over 1930 all Congress organisations were banned and leaders put into jail. It was on January 25, 1931, that Lord Irwin lifted the ban on the Congress and ordered release of Gandhi along with other Working Committee members. But the very next day Bose was arrested while leading a procession to the maidan in defiance of the Police Commissioner's order prohibiting Independence Day celebration. The government had always a cautious look over Bose and let no chance be lost to imprison him. It is difficult to understand why the government of India failed to insist Bengal government for his release while in U. P., Bombay and Madras, Congressmen, not even members of the Working Committee, were released by directions from the centre. These men were, however, Gandhi's particular associates in jail and Motilal's near relatives.⁵² It was a wonder that Gandhi and even Motilal kept complete mum over Bose's detention. Was it because his ceaseless propaganda for independence which was inimical to the Congress unity? Was it because a large section of congressmen reposed faith on him to win complete national independence through ceaseless civil disobedience campaigns he advocated for? However Gandhi might have thought, the government remained determinedly reticent to Gandhi's repeated warnings, and even to the ultimatum of the Congress, still Gandhi would not think in terms of severance of all British connections. "Even when I moved the Lahore resolution, I made it quite clear that independence need not mean complete dissociation from British connection"—Gandhi said in a press interview.⁵³ He had failed to convince Bose in his point of view, so he might have thought it was better to get rid of Bose by any means.

Dissentient Bengal :

Bose's views were shared by many in Bengal. As seen

earlier, the rank and file of the Congress in Bengal were members of revolutionary parties whose first aim was the repulsion of the British from the Indian soil. The bureaucracy was ever suspicious of the revolutionary spirit and had time and again tried to cripple it by enforcing repressive laws and ordinances. In the thirties Gandhi did not sympathise in any way with Bengal, when she was being tortured by the government and torn by communal quarrels, and her only outstanding leader was kept under continuous incarceration. By way of natural reaction Bengal began to question the sincerity of the all-India leadership. The government became very aggressive in its dealings with Bengal and Bengali youths. Following the foot-steps of Lord Curzon, the government proposed a merger of south-west Midnapur with Orissa. Atrocities perpetrated by the police in Chittagong and Dacca could only be compared with those at Amritsar in 1919. Two detenus in the Hijli Detention Camp died of police firing. People of Bengal wanted the Congress to take active steps for the redress of these wrongs. But the AICC remained unmoved. Bose formed a Committee of Inquiry into the incidents that led to firing. The callousness of the Congress hurt Bengali sentiment. Correspondents expressed their displeasure through the press. "I was astonished to find a man of eminence and responsibility as the Bardoli-Sardar taking shelter under the shadow of ignorance of the Bengal tragedies"—wrote a correspondent from Burdwan. "May I ask what opinion has the Working Committee, after hearing the details of the happenings, given to the proposal of Subhas babu for observing an all-India Hijli Day? Perhaps, it will now take the excuse of unavoidable delay and so banish the idea altogether"⁵⁴ Resolutions were passed in several DCCs in Calcutta and Bengal asking the AICC to fix a date styled the All-India Hijli and Chittagong Day for voicing

the protest of the people.⁵⁵ The North Calcutta DCC went as far as to seek permission for starting *satyagraha* in Bengal on these issues.⁵⁶ Sengupta telegraphed to Patel: "Chittagong and Bengal appeal to you as President, Congress, to fix all-India day for protest against Chittagong atrocities."⁵⁷

The Congress remained unmoved. The Government forced ordinance after ordinance on poor Bengal even during the so-called truce period.⁵⁸ Ten years back, almost a parallel issue, that of martial law rule in Punjab, had roused the Congress to take the vow of *satyagraha* and non-cooperation with the satanic government; ten years later the same Gandhi-led AICC did not raise a little finger for unfortunate Bengal. Was it an ostensible sign of Gandhi's dislike for the Bengalis? Was this dislike a reaction to Bose's popularity among them? Was he afraid that their radicalism might vitiate the political air and disturb the humiliating truce he was going to conclude?

Bose was as bold and outspoken in his own views, even defiant of Gandhi, as few in the Congress would have dared to be. In this context, however, Gandhi's dislike of him was very logical. During the dissensions in the BPCC between Bose and Sengupta, Gandhi lent his support to the latter. The curious point to note in the Gandhi-Sengupta relations was that the latter's relations with the *Anusilan* group of revolutionaries did not matter anything to Gandhi. . . . Judged from the standpoint of non-violence, there is not much to choose between Mr. Sengupta and Subhas Bose"—wrote Krishna Das, one of Gandhi's secretaries who had come to assess the Bengal situation. "Mr. Sengupta's party is composed of the following groups: the *Anusilan* group of revolutionaries, pledged to the cult of violence, aggressively opposed to your movement; Yotish Babu's

group of revolutionaries, also pledged to violence ; communists, pledged to violence and terrorism, fundamentally opposed to your idea of *Swaraj*, although they have made alliance with Sengupta under the exigencies of Bengal politics ; *khadder* workers, pledged to non-violence, a very small group.” The composition of Bose’s party was, as it turned out from Krishna Das’s letter, as follows : the *Yugantar* group of revolutionaries, pledged to violence, but not opposed the mass movement of the non-violent kind, it being the opinion of the group that such a movement is helpful towards preparing the ground for a greater revolution which was bound to be based on violence ; Bipin Ganguli’s group of revolutionaries, who believed in revolution, whether based on violence or non-violence. “My own impression is that Subhas Babu has got a compact party with some amount of discipline”, Krishna Das continued, “whereas Sengupta’s party is more or less a ramshackle one with elements which are bound together only by their common opposition to the present executives of the BPCC . . . And it was my misfortune”, the writer continues, “that all along I received nothing but opposition from the group of workers belonging to Mr. Sengupta’s party.” On the other hand, he informed Gandhi that Bose had played his part honorably and it was due to his continued activities that civil disobedience movement gathered strength in and around Calcutta.⁵⁹ There can be no other explanation than that Gandhi was out to destroy Bose’s leadership in Bengal, and as such, put all his weight on Sengupta’s scale irrespective of faith of either in violence.

In the meantime Gandhi had held talks with the Viceroy which culminated in the Gandhi-Irwin Agreement of March-4. The truce was very unpopular among all sections of the Bengalis (cf. Chs. 3 & 4). Sengupta, Gandhi’s blue-eyed boy in Bengal, tried his best to advocate the cause

of the truce in his province. In an address to the Bengal Students' Conference he reminded them that if they could strengthen their own national organisation and develop an atmosphere of non-violence, it would be possible for Gandhi to have even 'violent' prisoners released in the course of a few days or weeks. Within a fortnight Bose expressed his views condemning the truce. To him it was highly unsatisfactory and disappointing. "Of what use the truce terms were, he said in the presidential address delivered in the Naujawan Conference at Karachi, "if the lives of such heroes (Bhagat Singh etc.) could not be saved ?" The All-Bengal Students' Conference held in Calcutta on March 6-9, 1931, resolved that the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in no way came upto the expectation of the youths of Bengal and no settlement was acceptable to them unless all political prisoners were immediately released.

Whatever was his position in Bengal, Gandhi held the most dominant position in the national forum. Even so, arriving at Karachi for the Congress session he had to face black flag demonstrations,¹⁰ which apparently manifested his unpopularity on account of the Delhi Truce and Bhagat Singh's execution. But the subjects committee meeting revealed that there was no crack in his firm position in the Congress. It deputed him to represent Congress in the Round Table Conference. He therefore asked the opposition party to keep quiet until the Conference was over. He also placated them by moving a resolution advocating release of all political prisoners. To Bose he said that he had great regards for the ideals of the revolutionaries but not for their methods ; that Bose had fought two fights with him and that if he, Gandhi, returned barehanded from England, they would fight yet one more fight together.¹¹ An appeased Bose proffered his unqualified support to Gandhi. To win over dissidents like Bose and the Punjabis, aggrieved by

Bhagat Singh's execution, Gandhi thus managed by his wits. "The tactics of the official party was superb"—writes Subhas Bose, "To perfect the stage-management, Sardar Kishen Singh, the father of the late Sardar Bhagat Singh, was brought to the rostrum and made to speak in support of the Congress."⁶² One of the resolutions appreciated the courage and self-sacrifice of Sardar Bhagat Singh and his comrades. A back glance would show that the Gopinath Saha resolution, adopted by the Bengal provincial conference in 1924, had been bitterly condemned by Gandhi, although it resembled more or less the Karachi resolution of the AICC on Bhagat Singh.

But why did Bose give his unconditional support if he was convinced of Gandhi's reactionary attitude? The plausible answer seems to be that his pragmatic sense considerably valued the popularity of Gandhi as well as the role of the Congress in Indian national struggle. In his opinion both should be utilised for whatever they were worth. The moment was not so opportune as to warrant severance of connections with the mainstream of nationalist politics which was under Gandhi's firm control. He not only urged the youth of Punjab and Sind stop breaking away from the Congress, but also pleaded with them for capturing the Congress machinery and moulding it into their own way.⁶³ He was though against Gandhi's joining the Round Table Conference because it was insulting, he thought, that the Indian delegates would be selected not by Indian people but by the British government; that the decisions would not be final; and that the conference would not be confined between the Congress, the legitimate representative of the Indian people, and the British but would be open to non-descriptors of all kinds who had nothing to do with the fight for *Swaraj*.⁶⁴ While difference of opinion led them apart Gandhi did not try to draw him closer, on the country

continued the guide the Congress regardless of his critic's views. The Working Committee was formed, as in the previous year, with only the blind followers of Gandhi.

Leaving aside Bose's criticisms, was it really advisable for Gandhi to have accepted the London invitation? He claimed to be the national representative, but joined in a conference where representatives of different sections of the Indian nation were invited. By joining the conference he lent support to the British view that Indian people were divided in so many groups and had really no national organisation, to whom the British would transfer the power of administration.⁶⁵ He could not conceal his eagerness to go the Round Table Conference during his interview with Emerson; his urge for coming to an understanding with the British government overshadowed his sense of national honour. And the sort of constitutional settlements he was going to make was no secret to the diehard British bureaucrat. "He recognised the difficulties that would be created by an undiluted resolution in favour of complete independence at the Karachi Congress and by a declaration that the Congress would go on fighting until they achieved this" — wrote the Secretary. He also made it known to the Secretary that he would take care "that a course of this kind was not taken and that the actual resolutions of this nature would be qualified by speeches".⁶⁶ It is difficult to understand whose axe Gandhi wanted to grind—the imperialists' or his country's.

On 18 April Lord Irwin's term of Viceroyalty in India ended. He had, after all, shown a conciliatory gesture to the Indian leaders. His successor Willingdon's acceptance of office was marked by a renewed phase of official repression. The Congress was banned and almost all office bearers of the party were put into prison. An ordinance was promulgated restricting anything of a national move. Gandhi

returned from London, as was expected, empty-handed. In the meantime, a special session of the Bengal Provincial Conference at Berhampur resolved that the government had virtually violated the truce, therefore, the Congress should revive civil disobedience. "In view of the recent happenings at Chittagong, Hijli and Dacca, and the indifferent and callous attitude of the government about the demands unanimously made by the public in the press and the platform", so goes the resolution, "for the redress of those wrongs, indiscriminate arrests and detention of Congress workers of Bengal and lastly, the promulgation of the latest ordinance which is tantamount to semi-martial law in Bengal, this conference is of opinion that the government have practically ended the Gandhi-Irwin Pact so far as Bengal is concerned, and resolves that the time has arrived for the resumption of *Satyagraha* campaign for the attainment of independence, which alone can remedy all these wrongs and urges the people of Bengal to prepare themselves for the coming fight." At the September meeting of the CWC Jawaharlal with the support of Rajendra Prasad and Nariman, urged that Congress in U.P., Madras and Bihar should be allowed to adopt 'defensive direct action' in response to what they saw as official breaches of the settlement.⁶⁷ Situations in the North West Frontier Province and the U. P. were also tense; the U P. *kishans* were virtually in the midst of a no-rent campaign. In these circumstances, immediately after his return from England Gandhi sent a telegram to the Viceroy asking for an interview which the Viceroy flatly refused to grant. Lord Willingdon was in no mood to come to terms with the Congress. On the other hand, he blamed Irwin's conciliatory policy. "Gandhi had recently been a plenipotentiary on equal terms with the Viceroy, arranging terms of peace which resulted in the Delhi Pact" —wrote the Viceroy. "It had the effect of making Gandhi endeavour to deal with

me, when first I arrived, in the position of one who was practically the head of a parallel government." The Viceroy also gave the substance of his government's policy towards Gandhi and the Congress : "The policy of my government ever since I have been here, has been in the main to make Gandhi realise that we are the government and he is only the head of a political party."⁶⁸ The CWC meeting in Bombay on December 29 had authorised Gandhi to send the telegram to the Viceroy ; there was only one dissenting tone in the meeting, that of Bose who thought that it would be humiliating for Gandhi to apply for an interview.⁶⁹ He proved to be the true prophet.

The entire nation was burning with exasperated indignation. On New Year's Day, 1932, the CWC resolved that unless a satisfactory relief was granted in respect of ordinances and there was a forthcoming satisfactory reply from the Viceroy, the Congress would resume civil disobedience. Gandhi could not get over the nervousness that the movement might take a serious turn towards the goal of independence, so he again asked for an interview with the Viceroy who remained as adamant as ever and the nation plunged into a struggle of disobedience to unjustified laws even in the face of the severest government repression. For nearly a year the movement raged in full swing, and then with no result availing the people gradually lost interest. Early in 1933 Bose was sent to Vienna for medical treatment while most other leaders were in jail.

In Bose's estimation the 1932 movement was doomed to fail, because, the government by that time had grown familiar with the Congress methods and would not be startled as they were in 1930. Two years back "the Congress had taken the offensive while the government had taken the defensive. In 1932 it was just the reverse."⁷⁰ The Delhi

Truce gave the government an opportunity to be armed tooth and nail and "Willingdon was only too ready to accept the Congress challenge."⁷¹ "The government countered Congress with every resource at its command"—wrote Jawaharlal; "India lived practically under martial law and Congress never really got back the initiative or any freedom of action."⁷²

Gandhi must have recognised the futility of the movement, for no sooner was he out of prison than he called it off. Bose, who was in Vienna for treatment, issued a joint statement with Vithalbhai Patel describing Gandhi as a failure and calling for the reorganisation of the movement on more radical lines under a newbody. Like the Bengal revolutionaries he believed in building up of a world conscience in India's cause. He held definite views about it. "Though we cannot expect anything from any political party in England it is exceedingly important and necessary for our purpose that we should organise international propaganda on behalf of India," he said to the Kurtis of Germany. "It goes without saying that London must be an important centre for this international propaganda. A Britisher is a born propagandist and to him propaganda is more powerful than howitzers."⁷³ He regretted that Gandhi did not utilise his trip to Europe in 1931 for this purpose.⁷⁴ While in Europe, Bose did not let go the opportunity. On his way back to India he went to almost all East European Republics. Although the main theme of his interview was to popularise the Indian cause, intentionally or not, he also held up the defects of Gandhian leadership. To the Kurtis he said that politically he did not agree with Gandhi. He had certain ways of dealing with the British, a tendency to compromise, a way of reconciliation with them, which endangered India's political progress. India needed firmer methods to gain independence⁷⁵. At Budapest he said :

"As regards Gandhi's politics, many members of the nationalist movement felt that a more radical and uncompromising attitude was necessary." His speech recorded his unswerving faith in armed revolutions. Being asked whether the nationalists thought any means to be justified for India's freedom he answered for the nationalists: "Yes, all methods for getting rid of the English are justified, even revolution and violence."⁷⁶ He was critical of Gandhi's political wisdom, but would not give any quarters to any attempt of his character-slaughter. When an interviewer remarked that Gandhi and his political friends were no more than fattened capitalists, he immediately made it known that the party to which he belonged was a people's party and leaders like Gandhi himself were "men without worldly wants and with no desire to amass riches for themselves."⁷⁷

Nevertheless, Gandhi's magnanimity could not blind his younger comrade to his shortcomings as a political leader. Gandhi's surrender of 1933 was bitterly assailed. If the Delhi Pact of 1931 was a blunder, the surrender of 1933 was a calamity of the first magnitude—said Bose. By suspending the civil disobedience movement at a critical hour, the exertions, suffering and sacrifice of the nation in the last thirteen years were virtually undone. Discussing the future policy Bose emphatically stated that there was no community of interests between Britain and India, the prospect of periodical compromises must be ruled out for ever.⁷⁸ These constant criticisms had a cumulative effect on Bengal's political thinking and the Bengalees gradually lost interest in the affairs of the Congress. In the hasty session of the Congress that met at the north end of Chowringhee, Calcutta, on March 31 and April 1, 1934, (the Congress being banned, there could not be any regular session of the Congress before October, 1934,) no more than 236 out of

920 delegates represented Bengal and Assam.⁷⁹ Even Gandhi's proposed tour of Bengal failed to create any interest among the public of the province. "The efforts to organise reception committees and collect 'purses' have met with little response," reported the government, "on the other hand his opponents were busy in organising hostile demonstrations."⁸⁰

The main object of Gandhi's visit to Bengal and Calcutta in particular, was the settlement of the BPCC disputes. He could make no headway with the disputants, who were not prepared to allow their judgement to be swayed merely by the Mahatma's personal prestige. Gandhi, however, got out of an impossible position by handing it over to Aney. The attitude of the Bengali Hindu press hardened against the CWC for its acceptance of the Communal Award.⁸¹ Gandhi's fast on the Award was ridiculed as a farce, in view of the certainty of his ending it before any harm. Even, the report about his impending retirement was regarded with indifference, if not satisfaction. *Dainik Basumati* frankly deprecated the prospect of a dictatorship, which his continuation in the Congress implied.⁸² On the whole there was an atmosphere of disappointment with the Congress leaders and their activities. The non-inclusion of any Bengalee Hindu in the CWC was a serious grievance. 'The followers of the Saint of Sabarmati may not relish it', wrote a Bengali daily, "but it is perhaps true that he has been more and more espousing the cause of those non-Bengalis who are even ready to force Bengalis to a corner in all-India matters"⁸³

The Bombay Congress of October, 1934, introduced certain changes in the Congress constitution. The number of delegates in a plenary session, as also of the AICC were reduced. "The Congress is an unwieldy orga-

nisation,” said Gandhi moving the resolution, “in practice the full number has never attended the Congress.” The significance of this move is very great”, wrote Subhas Bose, “when in 1920 the Mahatma seized the Congress machinery and turned out the older leaders, the forces of democracy were on his side. Today the Mahatma is afraid of the forces of democracy which he has helped to stir up ; hence this attempt to reduce the stand not only of the Congress delegates, but also of the All-India and Provincial Congress Committees. Verily the Mahatma has ceased to be a dynamic force, may be it is the effect of his age.”⁸⁴

Gandhi must have been aware of the possible reactions to the decisions of the Bombay Congress. On the last day of the session he made his intention of retiring from Congress politics known to the audience. Bose interpreted this new move as pressure tactics, used by Gandhi's supporters for getting the constitution amendment resolution passed, by appealing to the sentiment rather than to the reason of the delegates. The government suspected a devious motive behind this retirement : “By freeing himself from Congress bodies Gandhi has full power to issue a ‘direction’ whenever he thinks fit, without any reference to one else.”⁸⁵ The Working Committee was formed by his blind supporters who were to hold the fort for him. Certainly therefore, his retirement did not mean much, as pointed out by Bose, “In 1924 the Mahatma had really retired from Congress politics together with his party. Today the person of the Mahatma may not be in the Committee, but his party is there, stronger than ever.”⁸⁶

Apart from Bose's criticisms, who was in Europe, none of Gandhi's moves went unchallenged in Bengal. In March, 1934, Bengal delegates led by Dr. B. C. Roy urged the end of civil disobedience in Bengal as it had amounted to an exer-

cise in futility and at a secret meeting of Congress leaders in Delhi decisions were taken for the revival of the Swaraj Party for the Congress to fight future elections.⁸⁷ Bengali opinion was, however, divided on the question of Council-entry. Excepting *Liberty* and the *Modern Review* most of the influential nationalist papers of Bengal regarded it as futile. Their view was that Council-entry would not further national interests and that those who favoured the policy at Delhi were self-seekers.⁸⁸ To Gandhi Council-entry seemed to be a lesser evil than the drift towards revolution. A communist journal found in the revival of Swaraj Party Gandhi's hesitations in mass movements. "The moment he came to notice that workers and peasants in India were gradually being imbued with a revolutionary mentality," the paper wrote, "he openly acknowledged the Swaraj Party instituted by the Indian bourgeoisie . . . It would be better for the workers and peasants of India if Gandhi withdrew from the sphere of Indian politics."⁸⁹ But the Gnat-bites of Bengali critics could not develop sufficient pressure and Gandhi maintained his leadership by patchwork compromises among different elements of the Congress, when the prospect of a constitutional change brought about newer controversial issues between him and the Bose-led faction.

The New Constitution :

The pact with Irwin made Gandhi extremely unpopular. His advocacy of the goal of Dominion Status and his signing of the Poona Pact raised in Bengal a stiff opposition. Along with the Communal Award, in the same white paper, the British Prime Minister had presented India with a federal constitution. It provided that there would be a federation of provinces of British India and such Indian states as would voluntarily join the federation. The Governor-General was to have exclusive responsibility for reserved

departments such as foreign affairs, defence, etc.,. It provided no material gain for the Indians in administrative responsibility; on the other hand a counter weight to democracy was introduced by inducing the Princes to join the federation. The proposals of the White paper added a new tangle to the Gandhi-Subhas controversies. The Congress at first rejected the proposal out-right,⁹⁰ but later on decided to take office under the reformed constitution. Only Bose remained unbending in his opposition. On the declaration of the White paper he commented: "There is no analogy between Provincial Autonomy and the Federal Scheme, and the acceptance of office in the Provinces by the Congress should not be construed as stepping-stone towards the acceptance of the Federal Scheme at the Centre."⁹¹ In December 1934 he paid a flying visit of six weeks from his residence in Europe to his family. His presence caused considerable interest and stir among the public and the press. But throughout 1935-36 the Congress created little stir in the political situation; Gandhi remained busy with his rural upliftment programme and the national struggle remained halted as it was in 1933. In the mean time the right-wing leaders of the Congress such as Rajendra Prasad, Jairamdas Doulatram and Sardar Patel were preparing the country for the acceptance of the Federal Scheme through speeches, criticised in Bengali Press as departures from the Congress ideals. In the absence of any activity on the part of the Congress, socialist and communist ideals gained ground, and *Krishak Samities* and Trade Union activities became frequent. In Bengal Gandhi's unpopularity reached a new low, and a 'League against Gandhism', was formed; its organisers held a meeting in the Calcutta maidan.⁹²

By 1936 a radical change overtook the conceptual world of politics. Simultaneous communist propaganda and work among the masses led even the ordinary member of

the society to thinking in a socialist stance. The masses were restless for militant activities. With all dislike for it, the bourgeois leaders of the Congress could not but recognise these forces. Gandhi realised that, to maintain the Congress solidarity it would have to make some definite pronouncement about its socio-economic goal, and for this, the President should be one from the younger generation and also a favourite of the leftist. In this regard Bose's claims were undisputed. He was back in his country after a compulsory sojourn in Europe and was arrested the moment he landed in India. No front ranking leader had to face as much suffering as Bose had to in the hands of the British police. The people felt for him for uncalled for victimization. Calcutta District Congress Committees in conjunction with the Congress Socialist Party, the Bengal Trade Union Congress, the Bengal Labour Party, various labour organisations and Students' Associations held a meeting on 10 May of 6,000 people at the base of the Octerlony Monument as 'Subhas Day', in protest against his arrest.⁹³ Beside Bose the other favourite of the youth, Jawaharlal had already his change in 1929. But, to Gandhi, Bose had a positive disqualification; this young leader was not amenable to his dictates. Since 1921 he had shown that he would say and do what he meant. His idea of mass organisation under Congress leadership included labour and found expression in his involvement in labour movements in defiance of Gandhi's ethics. Years in Europe had further cleared his vision, he had an experience of socialism in practice at Vienna and Gandhi could reasonably expect that Bose's socialism would not be of a utopian variety like that of Jawaharlal. Gandhi's discreet choice therefore fell again upon Jawaharlal, whose "head pulled him to the left, but his heart to the right, that is, to Gandhi", as Bose said to the Kurtis.⁹⁴ In a short acquaintance Rolland seemed to have

sensed this side of Jawaharlal's personality : "In his ideas he goes a long way, to the brink of communism and may be even beyond. But his filial respect for Gandhi makes him timid and uncertain in his action."⁹⁵ Gandhi chose Jawaharlal for the presidentship of the Lucknow Congress, persuaded Patel to withdraw his candidature and himself canvassed for Jawaharlal even in violation of the Congress convention that any leader of the province that was to host the session, must not hold the chair.⁹⁶

In the Lucknow Congress Jawaharlal represented Gandhi more than the Socialist group to which he belonged. He was personally opposite to the working of the provincial autonomy and characterised in his address the Reforms Act of 1935 as a 'Charter of slavery'. But the session rejected the motion for wrecking of the constitution and refusal of ministerial responsibility. Nehru took the hint and probably afraid of facing another rebuff, sought the help of Ballabhbhai in the formation of the Working Committee, although in his Presidential address he pleaded for 'infusion of younger elements into the top echelons of the party.' Ballabhbhai had earlier made it know that he would not accept Nehru's socialist views, and that he was for accepting ministerial responsibilities in the provinces instead of wrecking the Reform.⁹⁷ With the help of Jawaharlal, Gandhi was able to preserve the unity of the Congress. The new Governor-General Linlithgow "was happy at the stand against Socialism taken by Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachariar",⁹⁸ and showed his earnestness to befriend the Congress.

Bengal's political views, fed by the doctrine of socialism, had grown sufficient distrust of Gandhi to take the form of animosity. Bose's arrest caused so much indignation as to suggest that the anti-Bengali feeling of Gandhi and

other non-Bengali leaders was, in some measure, responsible for the arrest. "The motive alleged", noted the government, "being a fear that if Bose were present at Lucknow he would succeed in gaining influence over the Congress."⁹⁹ Gandhi-Government collabortion against socialism did justify Bengal's suspicion.

Nehru had justified his selection at Lucknow, so he was nominated by Gandhi as President for the next session also. At Faizpur, he further modified his views and declared that the Congress stood for democracy, not Socialism. The question of office acceptance was shelved till the election results were known.

In the 1937 election the Congress swept the polls, getting a clear majority in six out of the eleven provinces, and being the single largest party in Bengal and Assam. The question of accepting ministerial responsibility became a live issue and it was debated in the AICC meeting at Delhi in March, 1937. Bose and Nehru opposed office acceptance. But Gandhi was afraid that most of the men representing the Congress "would succumb to the temptations of office and the concomitant material gain."¹⁰⁰ It was so with Patel. Gandhi could not get over Patel's earnestness and so prescribed the compromise formula favouring acceptance of certain conditions, that was carried. But greater troubles awaited Gandhi in the coming year, when an overwhelming majority of the provincial committees sent Bose's name as the President designate in 1938.

By this time the war in Europe became imminent and the Congress faced the problem of whether to give or withhold assistance to Britain in her war efforts. The experience of co-operation in the First World War was not encouraging. Any question of co-operation would not have arisen if the

war to be was not a struggle between democracy and totalitarianism, and England representing democracy. To the Congress the alternatives were either to exploit Britain's adversity by a nation wide civil disobedience, or, cooperate in the war, see through the victory of democracy, and then get her own democratic rights from Britain. This was the crucial question. In the previous year's presidential address at Faizpur Jawaharlal declared : " Our destinies are linked up with it (the war), and our fate, like the fate of every country, will depend on the out come of the conflicts of rival forces and ideas that are taking place everywhere. Again I would remind you that our problem of national freedom as well as social freedom is but a part of this great world problem". A resolution was passed in Faizpur to the effect that the Congress would resist by all possible means the exploitation of Indian man-power and resources by British imperialists in the event-of War. Consequently anti-war speeches and demonstrations were organised by the Congress Committees in cities as well as in districts. British bureaucrats were much too familiar with the ways of the Indian leaders and they were not flurried by the outward signs. The D. I. B very correctly appreciated Indian thinking and wrote, Indian politicians are privately not unimpressed by the bellicosity of the Fascist powers, and do not seriously regard England as being with league with them. They are not as confident as they profess to be that the British and Indian armies will be used for Imperial aggression, rather than for defence against the Fascist Powers."¹⁰¹ They could reliably count on Congress cooperation.

Bose as President :

While the Congress was taking time to decide its course of action, Bose went further and thought in terms of bargaining with Britain's enemies, the Fascist Powers. His

activism and the resultant popularity among the youth raised him to the Presidential chair at the Haripura session of the Congress in 1938. In his presidential address he outlined a picture of the India as he cherished her to be. "If after the capture of political power, national reconstruction takes place on socialistic lines – as I have no doubt it will", he stated emphatically, "it is the 'have nots' who will benefit at the expense of the 'haves' . . . Regarding reconstruction, our principal problem will be how to eradicate poverty from our country. That will require a radical reform of our land system, including the abolition of landlordism. Agricultural indebtedness will have to be liquidated and provision made for cheap credit for rural population. An extension of the cooperative movement will be necessary for the benefit of both producers and consumers . . . A comprehensive scheme of industrial development under state-ownership and state control will be indispensable. . . . The state on the advice of a planning commission will have to adopt a comprehensive scheme for gradually socialising our entire agricultural and industrial system in the spheres of both production and appropriation." Probably Bose was the first Congressman to declare in public a programme including abolition of landlordism. The doctrines of socialism were explicit in the tone of his address, and he himself acknowledged : "I hold no brief for the Congress Socialist Party and I am not a member of it. Nevertheless, I must say that I have been in agreement with its general principles . . . Socialism is not an immediate problem for us, nevertheless, socialist propaganda is necessary to prepare the country for socialism when political freedom has been won." About the role of the Congress in mass organisation his view did not tally with that of Gandhi, he found no fault in the politicisation of labour for the Indian freedom movement : "The Trade

Union Congress and the *Kisan Sabha* organisations should not appear as a challenge to the National Congress which is the organ of mass struggle for capturing political power.”¹⁰² He was in favour of broadening the mass basis of the National Congress as an all-inclusive national front. Steadfast in his opinion, all along he tried to create for the Congress a mass base by participating in labour disputes on the labourers’ side. The Congress should have, according to him, the two-fold objective of winning political freedom and the establishment of a socialist regime.¹⁰³ He was deeply impressed by Municipal Socialism at Vienna. In an address to the Bombay Corporation he said : “Municipal Socialism is nothing else but a collective effort for the service of the entire community ; consciously or unconsciously we have been moving in the direction of Municipal Socialism, by taking up the duty of primary education, looking after public health, and tackling problems of infant mortality, maternity, drainage in addition to furnishing drinking water, roads, lighting etc.”¹⁰⁴

About the prospect of industrialisation in future India he had very little in common with Gandhi. “However much we dislike modern industrialism and condemn the evils which follow in its train”, he said, “we cannot go back to the pre-industrial era, even if we desire to do so.”¹⁰⁵ As President of the Third General Meeting of the Indian Science News Association he reiterated his belief in modern industrialisation. Asked by the scientist Meghnad Saha, if India of the future was going to “revive the philosophy of village life, of the bullock-cart, thereby perpetuating servitude”, or was going to be a modern industrialised nation, Bose answered that, whether liked by our leaders or not, the present epoch was the industrial epoch. “There is no escape from the Industrial Revolution,” he said, “We can at best determine whether this revolution, that is industrialisation, will be a

comparatively gradual one, as in Great Britain, or a forced march as in Soviet Russia. I am afraid that it has to be a forced march in this country.”¹⁰⁶

In 1938 the three main points of difference between Bose and Gandhi were socialism, industrialisation, and Congress attitude to war. About socialism and industrialisation he made his views explicit in his Presidential address. “The party that will win political freedom for India, will be also the Party that will win social and economic freedom for the masses” —was his opinion.¹⁰⁷

The worsening war crisis in Europe filled Bose with excitement and hope about India's future. In Britain's pre-occupation in the European war he found an opportunity for an all-India rising with a demand of immediate transfer of power. In case the British refused to accept Congress demands, the next course would be to secure the help of Britain's enemies. Bose thus outlined the course of action India should take in the impending international crisis. “He was perfectly ready to see India plunged into warfare by an invader”, commented the Bengal Governor after an interview with Bose, “because this would be the quickest way of making her a united country.”¹⁰⁸ In the European conflagration he saw the panacea of all ills in his country. Deep in his heart he cherished the faith that the last stage in India's freedom struggle would develop into an armed revolution.¹⁰⁹ He had been contemplating the formation of an Indian National Army since 1928. Ten years later he told the Governor of Bengal that India might one day be attacked by some foreign power and that she should therefore start organising her own army so as to be in a position to defend herself when the British army was gone from India.¹¹⁰ The invader of his expectations must have been then the Axis Powers. But while in Europe for

medical treatment during 1933-36, he made overtures for a rapport with the Nazi Government, thereby reviving the old alliance between the German government and the Indian revolutionaries during the First World War.¹¹¹ "The basis of a compromise between India and Great Britain does not exist", he said as President of the Third Indian Political Conference at London. "With regard to the question of the method we should adopt, I may say that the country has already rejected the path of periodical compromise . . . Our next requirement will be a scientific plan of action and scientific programme for the future. The method of action beginning from today and right upto the conquest of power will have to be visualised and planned out in detail as far as humanly possible."¹¹² In continuation of the same thought, he said to the Kurtis : "We need firmer methods to force the British from the Indian scene . . . British rulers are the most ruthless administrators imaginable. Only stark, brutal necessity will make them quit India. The coming war will perform this miracle."¹¹³ About seeking help from the Nazi government he admitted : "Rotten business, but it has to be done. Somebody has to do it. Life offers us only a single chance and we have to seize it . . . India must gain her independence, cost what it may."¹¹⁴ That was his principle—the necessity for Indian freedom at this juncture of history justified any extreme means.

Gandhi shared none of these guide-lines ; contrarily he regarded these with extreme repugnance. In numerous speeches and articles he repudiated the idea of class struggle as preached by the Communists, while Bose, in 1938, expressed his friendly attitude towards communism : "I have always understood, and am quite satisfied that communism, as it has been expressed in the writings of Marx and Lenin, and in the official statements of policy of the Communist

International, gives full support to the struggle for national independence and recognises this as an integral part of its world outlook". Explaining his earlier attitude of non-alignment with the Indian Communists he said : "Communism as it appeared to be demonstrated by many of those who were supposed to stand for it in India, seemed to me anti-national and this impression was further strengthened in view of the hostile attitude which several among them exhibited towards the Indian National Congress . . . The position today has fundamentally altered."¹¹⁵ In Gandhi's esteem industrialism was going to be a curse for mankind, while the Congress President in 1938 thought that the first thing for the national government of India would be to appoint a National Planning Commission, largely planning for the industrialisation of India. At the end of the year he appointed accordingly a National Planning Committee under Nehru's chairmanship, for drawing up a comprehensive plan for industrialisation. Gandhi was so annoyed that he asked his followers to stay away from that body.¹¹⁶ About exploiting the war situation, Bose and Gandhi held diametrically opposite views. Bose contemplated an absolute non-cooperation in British war efforts, allying on the otherhand with her enemies on prospective terms. Gandhi saw justice in offering help to His Majesty's Government against the Axis Powers and so, was opposed to any resistance to recruitment.¹¹⁷

With pronounced antagonism over every vital issue, Bose and Gandhi, both viewed with each other for the control of the Congress machinery in 1939. The tussle over Congress presidentship for the Tripuri session in March, 1939, lay centred over the questions : was India to take a drift towards socialism or maintain the status quo in her socio-economic relations ? Whom would she support in the war, Britain or her enemies ? To these was added a third

question, that of acceptance of the Federal scheme of government, as granted by the British Parliament in 1935. Bose's opposition to Federation was mainly due to the fact that expenditure upon defence and control of the army were altogether withheld from the popular part of the Federal government. He also disliked the nature and extent of the representation of the Princes.¹¹⁸ All these, he believed, were not in keeping with either democracy or lawful rights of the Indian people. Although in 1934 the Congress had rejected the scheme, some leaders like Ballabhbhai were making surreptitious deals for its acceptance by the Congress. They, the right-wingers by Bose's jargon, were interested more in sharing the power in administration even under British control, than in achieving complete national independence and founding a state based on equity and equality through revolutionary struggles. As the ruling President in 1938, Bose declared in pellucid terms : "So far as I am concerned, should the unthinkable contingency arise of the Federal Scheme being adopted by a majority within the Congress, it would probably be my duty to relieve myself of the trammel of office, so that I would be free to work for what I consider to be the best interest of the country, namely, open, unmitigated and unrelenting opposition to the monstrous Federal Scheme."¹¹⁹ His fight was for the assertion of democratic rights of the Indian people.

The Congress President in 1939 was thus going to give a vital twist in the course of the nationalist movement. Bose, who had adjudged Gandhi as a spent-up force since 1933, would not let the Congress pass in the hands of the quiescent right-wingers when the European war was looming large ; while Gandhi would not wait to see the Congress taking a war-path during England's adversity which it was sure to do under Bose's guidance. So a tie over president-ship—which was virtually a struggle between ideologies,

ensued at the turn of the year 1939. All leftist elements in the Congress nominated Bose for a re-election while the other choice was Azad. To avoid a contest Azad withdrew. But the rightists under Patel's lead insisted on Bose's withdrawal which he did not. So the Patel group selected Pattabhi Sitramayya as their nominee whom Bose defeated by a margin of two hundred votes. Influential members of the Congress grew critical of Bose's adamant behaviour, which they said was disruptive of Congress unity. Bose's stand was unambiguous. In a press statement issued on 27 January he said, "Though the Congress resolution on Federation is one of uncompromising hostility, the fact remains that some influential Congress leaders have been advocating conditional acceptance of the Federal Scheme in private and in public."¹²⁰ Bose referred to a press statement by Satyamurti, the deputy leader of the Congress Legislature Party in the central legislature, which mentioned the possibility of of the Congress considering the Federal Scheme with certain changes. Since none of the Working Committee members came out to protest Satyamurti, it was but natural to believe in their complicity in the matter. Bose's suspicion was aggravated by a newspaper report that Bhulabhai Desai in London was negotiating the terms placed by the Congress for the acceptance of Federation.¹²¹ Patel later on repudiated such allegations by Bose, and Nehru asked in a Press statement, "Is the growing struggle in the Indian States a prelude to our flirting with Federation?" But Khare, the Ex-Premier of the Central Provinces, pointed out "their no is like the 'no' of a newly wedded wife" and disclosed that "on that fateful night of the 25 July in the presence of Gandhiji the question of the First Federal Premier was discussed."¹²² Bose was frank enough to disclose the reasons for his stand and was also ready to step aside if only a leftist, like Acharya Narendra Deo, was nominated for President-

ship; the choice of the President was crucial, he held, because he was the initiator of the Congress policy. Patel held the opposite view—that the President had little powers of initiating policies, save by the consent of the Working Committee. For simple reasons he was thinking of a President who would bow down to the Working Committee. Patel's statement further revealed his intentions when, without any explanation, he claimed that Bose's re-election would be harmful to the country.

The statements made by Patel on behalf of some members of the Working Committee raised severe criticism throughout the country. Khare said that they, the Patel-group, had misused their position "which they secured by a gift from Subhas Bose (as President) by making low demand for an unknown colleague and opposing their Chief"¹²³ Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Jitendra Lal Banerjee issued similar critical statements. The *Hindusthan Standard* took Patel's statement as 'Scandalous and imprudent': "The statement issued by Patel and six others lacks the grace and decorum of the accepted canons of private ethics and social behaviour in our day-to-day existence."¹²⁴ Moreover, Patel's statement raised in the public mind a suspicion about his motives. "Are we to infer that Sriyut Bose's repeated stress on the dangerous drift to constitutionalism has produced some reaction somewhere in the Congress hierarchy?"—Wrote the *Hindusthan Standard*. "If so, what is the reaction? And who have reacted?"¹²⁵ In such a charged atmosphere the Presidential election was held. Bose defeated the Rightists' nominee Dr. Pattabhi by a comfortable majority. M. N. Ray, Jayprakash Narayan, Sahajanand, Narendra Deo and Nariman—all belonging to the leftists group, gave their whole-hearted support to Bose. Dr. Khare's statement was precisely for Bose—"Subhas Bose has sacrificed his all, even life, at the

alter of the Congress, and Pattabhi, who could not win even his municipal town and his District Board for the Congress though the entire Province was captured by the Congress."¹²⁶ The *Pioneer* declared against Pattabhi—"Dr. Sitaramayya is playing his cards well and from his recent statement it seems that he will make an ideal 'Yes-man' for Sardar Patel."¹²⁷ Gandhi remained silent throughout. Only after the results of the election were declared, he publicly announced his involvement in the affair; that he had been "decidedly against Subhas Babu's re-election, and that the defeat of Pattabhi was actually his." He did not bother to explain the reasons of his being decidedly against Bose, but declared that his defeat meant to him that his ideals and principles had been rejected by the majority of delegates: so it was better that Bose's group had alone the opportunity of dealing with Congress affairs. "After all," he remarked, "Subhas Babu is not an enemy of the country." This announcement, and the specific remark about Bose, appeared to be a naked confession on the part of the Gandhi-Patel group of a conspiracy to keep the Congress under their thumb. These tidings, in the eyes of Bengal, cast a dark shadow on Gandhi and almost eclipsed him. "Many will recall Mahatmaji's generosity on past occasions when his policy and programme were rejected by influential sections in the Congress"—wrote the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. "Defeat or victory does not move him or drive him to precipitate action." The editor found unmistakable signs of disappointment in his statement.¹²⁸ "Mahatma Gandhi has in a moment of irritation cast to the winds his sacred vow of non-violence and aimed a deadly blow at a seeming opponent"—wrote the *Hindusthan Standard*. "He has told the world times without number that his statement directed against Mr. Subhas Bose. Is it a language of love—"After all, Subhas Babu is not an enemy of the country?"¹²⁹

The paper further commented that if Gandhi wanted to control the Congress to the minutest detail, he should not have resigned.¹³⁰ Even Pattabhi, Gandhi's nominee and the official chronicler of the Congress, found it difficult to answer : "Why did Gandhiji refuse a second term to Bose ? Bose must have valued his second term only to re-organise the Congress on the lines adumbrated by him in Vienna. That alone, if nothing else, would be ground enough for Gandhi to resist such an endeavour..."¹³¹

The matter did not end there. Gandhi declared, "The minority may not obstruct on any account. They must abstain, when they cannot cooperate. Those, therefore, who feel uncomfortable in being in the Congress, may come out..." But it was not easy to come out ; the Congress could not be left over to an inveterate enemy of Federation. The Rightist group, therefore, brought about a resolution declaring that in selecting his working committee the President should conform to the advices of Mahatma Gandhi which was moved by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant during the Tripuri session. The President, Bose, was then critically ill and could not attend the meeting of the subjects committee. All amendments on the resolution, including the one moved by Nariman to postpone consideration of the resolution till the President was fit to attend the meeting, was lost¹³² and the resolution was passed in toto. However, though sought for by Bose, in terms of the Pant resolution Gandhi declined to give his advice ; consequently the working committee could not be formed. In the meantime, thirteen members of the old Committee tendered their resignations to the President, bringing the affairs of the Congress to a deadlock. The controversy continued and Nehru tried to persuade both to come to terms. To Gandhi he wrote—"I think now . . . that you should accept Subhas as President. To try, to push him out seems to me to be an exceedingly wrong step."¹³³ To

Bose he advised a personal dialogue with Gandhi to reach an understanding. Bose had been ill since the Tripuri Congress. Still he moved to Wardha, But Gandhi was unbending. Bose condemned the Pant Resolution as against the constitution and *ultra vires*, and taking the entire proceeding at Tripuri as a vote of no confidence against him, tendered his resignation at the next AICC meeting at Calcutta in April, presided over by Sarojini Naidu. Nehru moved a resolution, perforated by numerous amendments, requesting Bose to give a second thought to his decision of resignation. But, contrary to the normal procedure adopted in all public institutions and organisations, the resignation of the President was not put to the vote of the house. Instead Rajendra Prasad was declared the President of the Congress from the chair. A group of Congressmen sent a letter to the new President, Rajendra Prasad, protesting against Sarojini Naidu's handling of the proceedings, as also against the irregularity perpetrated in electing a new President before the resignation of the former was accepted.¹³⁴ The installation as President of Rajendra Prasad was followed by rowdy scenes which demonstrated Bengal's disapproval. The poet Rabindranath sent a message to Bose : "The dignity and forbearance which you have shown in the midst of a most aggravating situation has won my admiration and confidence in your leadership. The same perfect decorum has still to be maintained by Bengal for the sake of her own self-respect and thereby to turn your apparent defeat into a permanent victory."¹³⁵ Unfortunately, the poet's dream was never realised, because 'dignity' or 'decorum' were redundant terms in politics and the only requisite qualification of a politician was shrewdness. Had Bose worked in a less dignified way and nominated his Working Committee in violation of the Pant resolution, Gandhi would have come down for a compromise. But he had chosen the wrong way of honest and honourable settle-

ment which gave his opponents the lever to dislodge him from the office of the President even though the majority of the house was supporting him. Unconsciously he was leading his province to the dangerous trap of secession from the Congress, which had been resisted strenuously by his *Guru*, Das, on a similar situation at Bombay.¹³⁶ Bose should have constituted the Working Committee without the 'Old Guards, and seen how his opponents came down to at least conditional acceptance of his programme. For, Congress in those days was a part of any nationalist's life, rightist or leftist, and severance from it marked the end of his political career. Unfortunately for Bengal, Bose did not possess the serenity and farsightedness of Das, and on the spur of the moment he misjudged the role of the Congress in India's nationalist aspirations.

For Gandhi the purging of Bose was absolute necessity. Jawaharlal had spoken of his intentions to include new blood every year in the Working Committee, but in practice he had yielded to Patel. At Haripura Bose made three changes in the personnel of the Committee ; at Tripuri he could have added some more to get a majority over the old guards and thereby carry on the resolutions in the subjects committee. For what steps he would like the Congress to take were no secrets. About Federation he had made clear commitment to his countrymen ; about the war he was no less clear in his views. In the presidential address at Tripuri he declared : "The time has come for us to raise the issue of *Swaraj* and submit our national demand to the British Government in the form of an ultimatum". To Jawaharlal he wrote : "For sometime past I have been urging on everybody concerned, including Mahatma Gandhi and yourself, that we must utilise the international situation to India's advantage." He found no fault in an alliance with the Axis Powers and justified his stand with international

situations : "With all her communism in her internal policies, she (Russia) did not hesitate to enter into a pact with French imperialism when it suited her purpose . . . Even today Soviet Russia is anxious to enter into a pact with British imperialism."¹³⁷ Jawaharlal in reply showed his disinclination to agree with Bose's views about international affairs. That Bose did not wholly approve his condemnation of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, added to his discomfort.¹³⁸ Gandhi and his adherents were equally affected. After the resignation of the Working Committee members Bose reminded Gandhi that a year ago when at Wardha Gandhi had not agreed with his programme, but wanted Bose to assert himself then to be a dummy President. "If I am to continue as President, would you still advise me not to function as a dummy President as you advised me last year ?"¹³⁹ Gandhi's reply was the refusal of cooperation.

Having waged the war in three successive stages—before Tripuri, at Tripuri and after Tripuri, Gandhi came out in flying colours—having unsettled the judgement of the country by demolishing all claims of the left wing and placing the protege Rajendra Prasad on the Presidential chair of the Congress. On Bose's election Suren Maitra, an MLA and a former member of the AICC, had said in satisfaction : "Subhas Babu's success I interpret not as a personal triumph of his, but it proves that democracy is triumphant in Congress and a new despotism that has been sought to be introduced in it is knocked on its head."¹⁴⁰ Alas, he proved a false prophet after April, 1939. Gandhi won no doubt, but at the cost of the respect he had won from his countrymen. Sarat C. Bose complained of clandestine proceeding of the Working Committee without the knowledge and behind the back of the President.¹⁴¹ Bengal as a whole took strong exception to the whole affair and considered it as an insult to the Bengali race. The Congress came to be regarded in

Bengal as a non-Bengali association acting in an anti-Bengali spirit. "In the recent times when the Working Committee sits every time it must have something to pronounce against Bengal Congress"—wrote a correspondent. In a very suggestive letter the writer wanted to draw the attention of the Congress Secretary to some vital points: "Have you ever thought that by these repeated strokes of 'injunctions' upon the BPCC the Bengal workers are becoming more and more disgusted with the Working Committee and consequently their morale is going to break? Have you ever given a little thought over the idea that there is a conspiracy of the non-Bengalis against the Bengalis gaining ground? Had it ever occurred to your mind that Bengal is drifting away or forced to drift away from the vanguard of national struggle?" The last mentioned suggestion put in a nutshell the sum total of Gandhi's impact on Bengal politics. The writer commented with regret: "Reactionary Jinnah is called repeatedly to conference but nationalist and patriot Nariman should not be asked to give his active service through the Congress. Is he a greater reactionary?"¹⁴³ The speech of the Congress MLA Narendra Chakravarti in the legislature echoed the same voice: "Today the hearts of the Bengalis are distressed to see the organised conspiracy of the whole of India against Bengal."¹⁴⁴ The government noticed the trend of public opinion as broached by the press and wrote: "The resignation of Subhas Bose is set down to a conspiracy on the part of the Congress High Command and Gandhi comes in for a good deal of adverse criticism for his attitude in this connection."¹⁴⁵ *Ananda Bazar Patrika* bitterly remarked that Gandhi was serving his own purposes under the plea of serving the nation and the Congress.¹⁴⁶ Congress and *Khadi*, symbols of Gandhism, lost all importance in Bengal. "The present position of *Khadi*-wearing is such that few primary committees may exist or can be formed if

at least five members are to be habitual *Khadi*-wearers"—informed Satish C. Dasgupta.¹⁴⁶ In fact the reaction against the ouster of Bose was too pronounced and the Congress High Command found itself in a somewhat precarious situation. "After Tripuri the whole of Bengal is against Gandhi" reported Sir N.N. Sarkar. Bidhan Ray, who represented the pro-Gandhi group in Bengal, tried hard to capture the BPCC executive where Bose commanded a three-fourths majority, and although Roy "seemed to favour Federation", noted Sarkar, "was unable to express his views owing to the attitude of Bose."¹⁴⁷ The Viceroy made it known to the Secretary of State that the Bose revolt and the thrust to general Congress discipline which it represents, continued seriously to disturb the right wing.¹⁴⁸ The BPCC was under Bose's control and being led by him the provincial committee raised the standard of revolt against the Working Committee by calling in to question some of the decisions of the AICC. The General Secretary, AICC, requested all provincial committees to stop such undesirable activities. President Rajendra Prasad sent a telegram to Bose stating that he was surprised to read his statement fixing July 9 for protest against the AICC resolution on *Satyagraha*.¹⁴⁹ The President also issued a statement warning the subordinate committee that defiance of the AICC resolution would amount to a breach of discipline. Bose replied that it was within the constitutional and democratic right of the provincial committees to protest against AICC resolutions and mobilise Congress opinion against such resolutions they appealed to the Working Committee to hold it in abeyance.¹⁵⁰ The Working Committee tried in vain to supersede the BPCC by an ad-hoc-body, when the former by a resolution passed by a large majority had deplored the decision of the Working Committee to remove Bose from the office of the President and reaffirmed its full confidence in him. "This result

cannot, however, be regarded so much as a triumph for Subhas Bose," pointed out the Bengal government, "as a vehement protest against what is regarded as an attempt to punish Bengal."¹⁵¹ Bose in a statement on the disciplinary action taken against him by the Congress Working Committee said : "I Welcome the decision . . . this decision is the logical consequence of the process of 'Right Consolidation' which has been going on for the last few years and which has been accentuated by the acceptance of the Ministerial office in the Provinces."¹⁵² But till then he failed to see through the implications of the 'Right Consolidation'—that it would hit hard on the disunited forces of revolution. He wasted his energy criticising the Congress leadership when he should have rallied and united all the leftists under one banner to measure his strength against the 'Right Consolidation', which according to him was sure to lead the country towards a compromise with the British, guaranteeing nothing else but the socio-political needs of the conservative bourgeoisie.

The War :

The declaration of the War in Europe in September 1939, further deteriorated Bose's relations with the Congress. In his Presidential address at Tripuri Bose had given the call for a fight when Britain was in danger. "There is no doubt that once there is stable peace in Europe . . . Great Britain will adopt a strong Empire policy. The fact that she is now showing some signs of trying to conciliate the Arabs as against the Jews in Palestine", he opined, "is because she is feeling herself weak in the international sphere. In my opinion, therefore, we should submit our national demand to the British Government in the form of an ultimatum and give a certain time-limit". He was addressing a meeting at Madras when the news of the declaration of war

came to him. "This was India's golden opportunity", he said promptly, "with Congress in power in eight provinces, the strength and prestige of our national organisation have gone up."¹⁵³ Gandhi was thinking just the other way, he pleaded for unconditional cooperation with the British since they were in distress. He met the Viceroy on 5 September and issued a statement declaring that the British was fighting a just cause. "In spite of the differences between India and Britain on the question of Indian independence," he declared, "India should cooperate with Britain in her hour of denger. I am not, therefore, just now thinking of India's deliverence".¹⁵⁴ Patel struck the same tone in the *Bombay Chronicle* of 6 November ; "There was no intention that the Congress should harass the British Government in its present plight". Gandhi went so far as to telegraph privately to his son Manilal, who was at Johannesburg in Africa, strongly urging that the proposed *Satyagraha* there should be called off.¹⁵⁵ Many in the Congress might have been willing to cooperate with the British presumably with the hope that their cooperation would bring about an easy transfer of power. The Congress Ministry in U.P. declared for cooperation while Rajagopalachari, head of the Madras Ministry, had to be restrained by the Governor from detaining all Germans in his province and seizing their bank-balance.¹⁵⁶ Nehru in a press interview at Rangoon said : "This is not the time to bargain. We are against the rising imperialism of Germany, Italy and Japan and for the decaying imperialism of Europe "¹⁵⁷ Arriving at Calcutta he had to face a hostile demonstration demending firm action against the British. Ex-detenus in Bengal were, according to gavernment reports, waiting eagerly for Bose to initiate action.¹⁵⁸

On 8 September Bose, although not a member, was invited to attend the meeting of the Congress Working

Committee, still showed no change of his uncompromising attitude. His stratagem was that British adversity presented India's opportunity. Nevertheless, within a week the Committee passed a resolution which was opposite to Bose's view and virtually an offer of cooperation; "A free and democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic cooperation". The Congress decision of resigning Ministries in all Congress-held provinces had been welcomed by Bose who had also insisted that it should be the preliminary step towards aggressive efforts like creation of a constitutional deadlock, fomenting of industrial and agrarian unrest and initiation of boycott of British goods. To the journalist, Durga Das, he said that the war had offered him an opportunity to show that action, and not talk, would get the coveted freedom. He was touring all over India to organise resistance to the Congress High Command's attitude towards the war in the course of which he ridiculed the Congress policy both before and after the declaration of war. At Jabbalpur he said that the time was ripe for a forward move and this should not be put off as Gandhi insisted, until communal harmony was achieved, since the adoption of some form of direct action would improve the communal situation. "The slogan of unity at any price and under all circumstances", he wrote in his journal, "is a convenient slogan in the mouth of those who have lost dynamism and revolutionary urge. Let us not be led away by its fascinating appeal."¹⁵⁹ In his interpretation the Allahabad resolution of the Working Committee was as "licking the feet that kick", and was intended to "hoodwink and bluff" the country into inaction.¹⁶⁰ In a meeting of the Presidents and Secretaries of district committees of Bengal, it was demanded that the Congress should inaugurate direct action on an all-India scale, and should at least authorise the local Congress

to take direct action. The volume of criticism of Gandhi grew in Bengal—reported the Bengal Government; the more aggressive elements questioned whether his leadership would not result in a diminution of Congress prestige.¹⁶¹ Throughout the period from October 1939 to March 1940 the Congress Working Committee repeatedly appealed to the people to show “restraint in work and deed”. Inside the AICC itself discontent was manifest at this policy of inaction. As many as 58 members voted against the official resolution taken at its meeting at Wardha. “The more a struggle seemed inevitable”, commented a Communist, “the less the Congress leadership liked it.”¹⁶² The relationship between Bengal and the Congress High Command worsened in 1940. Subhas Bose was expelled from all Congress institutions for three years. He did not obey the expulsion order, but continued to control the BPCC. The High Command declared the existing committee illegal and formed an ad-hoc body. Under divided leadership the Congress lost its weight in Bengal and the Hindu Mahasabha stepped in as the champion of Hindu interests. Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, who was running the rival Congress organisation, took up the brief for the High Command and pleaded for accepting whatever the British Government was prepared to offer, in the words of Gandhi “to pitch the tone of immediate demands lower.” The opposition view was that Great Britain was bound to concede whatever was demanded because of her increasing difficulties in the War. In February Gandhi met the Viceroy, but the talks were indecisive. This fruitless interview was ridiculed in the Bengli Press. *Ananda Bazar Patrika* commented ironically that “having received an assurance from Gandhi that he will not create trouble, the British Government are flattering him a little.” The *Patrika* cried out: “who will save the Congress and mass agitation from this gradual increasing spiritual and moral pressure of

Gandhi ?” It further commented that “the man who is not even a member of the Congress will play with the present and the future of a big democratic political institution while a band of timid and hypocritical people will witness this deplorable spectacle like helpless lambs ?”¹⁰³ The *Hindusthan Standard* commented sarcastically that Gandhi “should make it clear also that his intoxicating *mantra* of independence is intended to perpetuate the British trusteeship” and that “the holy mission of Wardha shall be pursued in collaboration with the Viceroy and against the background of the divinely executed trusteeship.”¹⁰⁴ That the criticisms of Bose had successfully identified the Gandhi-Patel group with British imperialism—is clear from these Press reflections.

In March 1940, the Congress session at Ramgarh could not but pass the only resolution confirming the Congress goal as “nothing short of complete Independence,” and declared that the resignation of Congress Ministries was a preliminary step, to be followed by civil disobedience. By then Bengal as a whole had lost faith on civil disobedience. May be, the Gandhian plan of *Satyagraha*, which did not favour either picketting or coercive methods or aggressive mass movements, was a relief to the richer classes.¹⁰⁵ but it had no appeal for the young volunteers. Consequently, the signing of the *Satyagraha* pledge, as desired by Gandhi was very much disliked by the Bengal volunteers and many of them, disdaining to sign, had to resign. This move was criticised even by Congress members not allied to the Bose group.¹⁰⁶ Both the revolutionaries and the conservatives believed that this *Satyagraha* would end in another compromise with the government which was a characteristic feature of Gandhian leadership. The actual position of the Congress in relation to the War created misgivings in many minds as did Gandhi’s interpretation of *Swaraj* sometime

earlier. From 1927 onwards the Congress had been publicly proclaiming its determination not to take part in any imperialist war ; and since 1938 it had been condemning the Fascist Powers of Germany, Italy, Spain and Japan. So the outbreak of War between England and Germany found the Congress in a peculiar predicament. Gandhi tried to find out a 'compromise'. "If I may not help the Allies", he remarked, "I do not wish to disaster them . . . I do not seek any gain from their embarrassment."¹⁶⁷ But this was certainly not the view of the country. The Bengal situation has been discussed above. V. K. Krishna Menon, one of Nehru's closest friends, exclaimed that he failed to understand, how could Gandhi, "the so-called apostle of truth and non-violence", use his powers of persuasion to support the most organised violence in the world. He said that Gandhi had given the British what they wanted now and that at no time had he seriously inconvenienced them.¹⁶⁸ June, 1940 was a critical month for the World War in Bose's estimation. Hitler overran Belgium and France and was knocking at the gates of Paris which fell on 13 June. Three days earlier Mussolini had joined the war. Bose arrived at Sevagram with an appeal to Gandhi to assume leadership. But Gandhi replied : "Why do you think we cannot get better opportunities later on ? . . . Both politically and morally, I feel, we should not be hasty in launching a movement at the present juncture. My conscience tells me to wait for better times."¹⁶⁹ The I.B. reported that Gandhi had expressed concern at the conduct of those Congressmen who indulged in anti-war speeches.¹⁷⁰ The AICC Secretary, J. B. Kripalani issued a circular letter to all provincial committees- drawing their attention to the possibility of a fast by Gandhi if his instructions were not sincerely followed by Congressmen.¹⁷¹

Having resigned his Presidentship of the Congress,

Bose formed in May, 1939, a new party called the Forward Bloc. While the Congress was lending at least its moral support to the British, Forward Bloc arranged anti-war rallies and demonstrations. To create a stir in the stagnant political situation Bose started an agitation over the removal of the ill-famed Holwell Monument at Calcutta, and was forthwith imprisoned by the government. Urged by Bengal spokesmen to fight for his release, Gandhi made it known that inspite of Bose's being a renowned leader as also an ex-President of the Congress he had no intention of making the Congress fight for a side-issue.¹⁷² Obviously this gesture added to Gandhi's unpopularity in Bengal. If the Holwell movement had nothing to do with the business of the Congress, the monument was no doubt a slur on national sentiments; Gandhi himself had taken up many irrelevant issues and put all his weight thereupon, even going so far as to declare a fast unto death. The affair relating to the people of the princely state of Rajkot may be cited. Bose immediately subjected it to a scathing criticism. "What is this fast, if it is not moral coercion and why should the apostle of non-violence resort to it?"—he asked. "Fast is now being used, in connection with the sabotaging and killing of the mass movement. Consequently, we, who believe in mass movement, cannot give it our moral support. It should rather be our duty to openly denounce the fast, even at the risk of being misunderstood or abused in Gandhian quarters"—was his comment.¹⁷³ Only a few months back, when prisoners in Dum Dum and Alipore jails took recourse to hunger-strikes, Gandhi bitterly remarked that hunger-strikes had been a plague in the society.¹⁷⁴ When the Congress refused to do anything for him, Bose himself resorted to a hunger-strike for coming out of imprisonment, dead or alive. Seeing his firmness and the alarming condition of his health, the

government released him. Sometime in the second fortnight of January, 1941, he made an adventurous and courageous escape to Germany via Afghanistan, to realise his long-cherished hope of securing Axis Powers' help for India's salvation. Before leaving the country for ever, he made attempts to strengthen Bengal against Congress opposition by forging Hindu-Muslim unity. But his alliance with Suhrawardy and the Muslim League in the Calcutta Corporation affairs proved to be short-lived. Earlier his attempts at toppling the Huq-Muslim League coalition Ministry and reinstating a Congress government with Huq as Chief-Minister in its stead was also frustrated by the Governor himself.¹⁷⁵

Bose's defeat marked the end of the tradition created by Deshbandhu Das and the militant nationalists of Bengal—a tradition of opposition to the ethics and methods of Gandhian leadership. For two decades Gandhi could hardly keep any hold over Bengal, for she preferred to move in her own way, directed by her own political views and experiences. True, Bengali leaders had been attracted by the radical part of Gandhi's programme, viz., incorporating the masses in the nationalist movement. But while implementing they found very little in common with Gandhi's doctrine and their understanding of that. In Gandhi's hesitations they found insincerity. In the battle that ensued between Gandhi and Bengal over the directions of the nationalist movement, Bengal had won in the first round. As years rolled on, Gandhi consolidated his hold on the national organ, and the Congress executive turned to be a stronghold of his loyal followers. So Bengal with her distinct thoughts and deeds, behaved like a rebel. With her deep-rooted faith in winning complete national independence through armed revolution, Bengal could not adhere to the official Congress policy as directed by Gandhi

and his followers, nor was she in the dominating position after Das's death to make the Congress take the way she thought best. Bose became the mouthpiece of Bengal's rebellious stand against the parent body. From 1928 onwards he carried on ceaseless fight against Gandhi and the Working Committee, lest they led the Congress back to the old Moderate ideal of Dominion status under the British empire, to be achieved through constitutionalism. Gandhi, an expert manoeuvrer, maintained his hold on the Congress by alternately opposing and appeasing the radicals who shared Bose's point of view. Bose by his clarity of thought and consistent actions had won the hearts of the youth of the country, and thus successfully led a second front in the Congress, antagonistic to Gandhi's leadership, that was bound by class-interests on the one hand and compromising attitude towards British imperialism on the other. Defeat of Bose came as an anti-climax when he had just reached the pinnacle of victory. Two grievous blunders cost him the leadership of the nationalist movement, when for some positive militant steps the rising generation was waiting so earnestly. First, that he did not constitute the Working Committee in defiance of Gandhi and the Pant Resolution, and second, that he could not give effect to his plan of a Left Consolidation. He must have realised that being out and out a leftist his position in the AICC was precarious, as he himself recorded Gandhi to be saying that there could be no compromise with the leftists in conducting the business of the Congress.¹⁷⁶ This should have been the signal for effecting a well-organised united left front to counteract the reactionary Congress. The Left Consolidation that was formed after Bose's resignation from Congress presidentship proved to be too short-lived to have any real impact on nationalist politics. M. N. Roy did not share

Bose's views on the war issue. He broke his alliance with Bose in July. The Communists viewed the Congress as essentially a bourgeois institution even incapable of transformation, so they preferred to keep aloof from that organisation, while Bose had an unfailing reliance on the unique role of the Congress in India's freedom movement. This vital difference of opinion could not be made up. Bose accused the Communist Party of "not having its roots in the soil," so in his opinion, "it often erred in estimating a particular situation or crisis and consequently adopted a wrong policy".¹⁷⁷ In December the communists left him. Throughout 1938, he claimed, he repeatedly advised the Congress Socialist Party to broaden its platform and form a Left Bloc for rallying all radical and progressive elements in the Congress,¹⁷⁸ but himself did not take the lead of the party to achieve that goal. Thus, as party leader he "failed to create a solid party behind himself", and when he challenged Gandhi, the central figure of a well-organised and disciplined all-India party, "Bose had nothing behind him beyond unorganised popular support . . . Thus he was never able to knock his party enemies on the head and was paralysed all along by the factious squabbles in which he became enmeshed."¹⁷⁹ The measure of popular support behind him can be gauged from this government report : "The Congress President could muster in Calcutta no more than 2,000 for an audience on any day. Subhas Bose can always count on an audience of 5-6,000 for any purpose. One of his meetings attracted a crowd of 10,000."¹⁸⁰ But this mark of popularity was, unfortunately, no vindication of his able party-leadership.

Gandhi came out in the long run as the best party-leader. His inconsistencies brought him criticisms ; paradoxically, by these inconsistencies he made his position unassailable in the Congress ; for he was the supreme

leader, amenable to all shades of political views present in the Congress. In the late thirties he became confident of his position and showed no more inconsistency. On the face of bitter criticisms he remained unmoved and stuck to his way. The more he seemed indifferent, the more inimical became his critics. His fasts were condemned in Bengal as "not only futile but positively mischievous." His agents in Bengal were looked upon with extreme hatred. "Kiran Shankar Roy sent an ungracious telegram to Mahatma Gandhi congratulating him on his retirement", remembered a widely-circulated daily. "There were, and are many critics of Mahatma Gandhi, but I believe there was none more rabid, at least in Bengal, than Mr. Roy."¹⁸¹ Holding the key for administrative power, Gandhi in no time won over such recalcitrants like Kiran Sankar Roy and in fact, in the forties Gandhi was happy with the Congress united under his monolithic leadership. Even the repellant and rebellious Bengal Congress was brought under the lead of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar and Kiran Sankar Roy, who adhered to Gandhi more for the safety of their capitalist interests and administrative power than for any attraction for his idealism. "His (Kiran S. Roy) getting the blessings of Gandhi is not because he has become a convert to the cult of *Charka* and developed an ear for its music", commented a paper ironically, "there has been some such arrangement that Roy will play the trickster while Dr. (Prafulla Chandra Ghosh) will ply the *Charka* for both."¹⁸² Nevertheless, Indian people could not think of any other man than Gandhi to lead them in the directions of freedom. Away from home for more than three years, Subhas Bose also till then shared his people's thoughts. On 6 July, 1944, he sent his appeals over the Rangoon Radio to the Father of the Indian Nation to rise and rouse the nation, trying at the same time to

Justify his own march with Japanese help : “I had not found a single instance in which an enslaved people had won freedom without foreign help of some sort As for the moral question whether it was right to take help, I told myself that in public as in private life, one can always take help as a loan and repay that loan later on. Moreover, if a powerful Empire like the British Empire could go round the world with the begger’s bowl, what objection could there be to an enslaved, disarmed people like ourselves taking help as a loan from abroad ?” But the Father of the Nation did not offer any help to the patriot struggling from outside the country for breaking away from foreign fetters.

Conclusion

The two decades between the years 1921 and 1941 witnessed a remarkable change in the policy and approach of the Bengali nationalists towards the Indian National Congress. Prior to 1921, leadership of the Congress was a close preserve of rich, anglicised and learned professionals, who esteemed only the Western education and culture along with its political thought and Parliamentary democracy. Their demands did not go beyond an elected central legislature with a considerable Indian share in administration, autonomous provinces under an Indian bureaucracy, and protection for infant Indian-owned industries. Their criticism of government policies as well as placing of their own demands resembled parliamentary debates, which came in the form of resolutions taken in annual three-day Congress sessions. Early in the twentieth century Bengal alone had, to her credit, the singular example of an anti-government agitation involving a large section of the common people besides the elitist leaders and escalating beyond the congress pandal. It was not merely a war of words and resolutions, but a direct fight—a “passive resistance” against an unsympathetic government by boycotting it politically and economically. However, as years rolled on the traditional fashion of agitation by annual resolutions revived.

In the year 1920, Gandhi challenged the sterile form of agitation so long followed by the National Congress. He advocated a direct fight against the bureaucracy which would involve all sections of the Indian people and would alert the government for the consequent drain of its

financial resources. His programme which was not aimed at any immediate gain in administrative partnership, was directed against the wrong done to the Punjabis in the Jallianwallahbagh massacre by the British government in India, and to the Turkish Sultan by the proposal of the Allied Powers including Great Britain of dismembering his empire. For the redress of these two wrongs Gandhi asked the Congress to launch a movement on the united strength of the Hindus and Muslims, capitalists and labour, landlords and peasantry, lawyers and teachers and students. As the means of the struggle he prescribed severance of connection with all government institutions, boycott of British goods and carrying on temperance campaign. He advised setting up of national schools and arbitration boards and introduction of spinning wheels in every household by way of a preparation for the economic struggle.

To the elitist leaders of the Congress, severance of connection with the government meant much too great a sacrifice. Khilafat and spinning wheel both bearing a revisionist tone, had no meaning to the advanced outlook of such leaders. Their liberal political views were not in tune with these socially conservative principles. They loathed also the idea of mass involvement in politics which was sure to come into clash with land and industrial interests. By September, 1920, the general trend of opinion appeared to be in Gandhi's favour ; so in a special session of the Congress at Calcutta, the older leaders of the Congress had to measure their strength against Gandhi's. As hosts the Bengalis showed no leniency ; on the contrary they voiced their scepticism about Gandhi's programme. Byomkesh Chakravarti, Chairman of the Reception Committee, candidly admitted his reservations about it, while B. C. Pal and C. R. Das made an unsuccessful attempt to amend Gandhi's resolution. On the whole,

Bengal was not ready to accept the majority verdict. Here, in the Non-cooperation debate at the Calcutta Special Congress, was the beginning of Bengal's opposition to Gandhism that spread over the two decades under study.

The difference between Pal and Das on the one hand and Gandhi on the other was not merely on political view-points; it related to fundamentals and was symptomatic of an undercurrent of thinking born of Bengal's sense of a superior cultural heritage, rich and diverse political experience and a totally distinctive religious attitude. Gandhi's strength lay in his popularity as a religious and moral preacher; but Bengal never liked mingling up politics with religion. She probably had the insight of realising the baneful effect of such a muddle, for which Bengal ultimately had to suffer most tragically. Bengal's feeling on this issue has been very aptly reflected in Bose's comment: "The spiritual man has always wielded the largest influence in India. For various reasons. Gandhiji came to be looked upon by the mass of the people as a Mahatma . . . The asceticism of Gandhiji, his simple life, his vegetarian diet, his adherence to truth and his consequent fearlessness—all combined to give him a halo of saintliness."¹ Learned professions and white-collar jobs under the bureaucracy constituted aristocracy in Bengali society, while the Gujaratis, including Gandhi himself, were basically a commercial and trading community with not much craze for higher education. The change in Congress leadership was immediately felt in its composition as it came to be. So long an association of intellectuals not having much direct commercial interest, where the Bengalis dominated, the congress under Gandhi's leadership had a changed complexion. The voice of the business community grew strong and had a definite influence in determining the course of action of the Congress. They

helped Gandhi's rise to power, because in Gandhi's programme of Court-Council-Education boycott they had little to lose, whereas the Bengali middle-class intelligentsia had a great social and professional stake.

The elitistic leadership was substantially shadowed being outnumbered by the simple masses who were drawn into the arena of politics by being deeply moved by Gandhi's personality and postures in politics. This may partly explain why, though defeated in the special Congress, Das and Pal preferred to remain in the Congress. Das's intention in coming to an understanding with Gandhi seems to have been to crossbalance Gandhi's dictatorship in the Congress. The annual session at Nagpur in 1920 accepted the resolution based on the terms of Das-Gandhi agreement. It included Das's terms such as making '*Swaraj*' or self-rule the goal of the impending struggle in addition to the narrow and sectarian goals of redress of Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, as suggested by Gandhi. Organisation of labour and peasantry under Congress leadership was another among Das's terms, while his insistence led to the withdrawal of the Council-boycott clause. At Nagpur, in December 1920, the Congress resolved to declare non-violent war against the bureaucracy until the above-mentioned goals were reached in specified stages and through specific means. The resolution was accepted unanimously.

But Gandhi could not square up his accounts with Bengali opposition even though there was the formal acceptance of his programme. First of all, there was a section of radical Bengali youth who would not agree to the purely non-violent character of the struggle. Many preferred to remain outside the Congress and discredit non-violence and Gandhi's movement by publishing satirical literature. While those who joined the movement, though they found little

consistency in the promises of the resolution and their implementation, accelerated the movement to a great extent beyond any doubt. Gandhi's associates in the business community, however, found it difficult to allow the volunteers to carry on picketing and to organise *hartals* against their interest. They began to protest. Pulled asunder by clashing interests of his associates, the bewildered Gandhi had to cry caution at every step. He sanctioned organisation of labour and peasantry but not their participation as such in any political move. Volunteers failed to find the distinction between organisation of the masses under a political party like the Congress and asking them for political action. In fact such subtle differences were understood by the leader alone. Misunderstanding over such issues is illustrated clearly in the dispute over the Chandpur coolie affair in 1921. Gradually it generated a hunch in the shrewd Bengali mind that the leader did not want the principles he preached to be put into practice or trial.

Sandwiched between the volunteer's zeal and businessmen's dislike of the movement, Gandhi called a sudden halt in the movement only to heighten the distrust in his leadership. The first reaction to the withdrawal of the movement was the formulation of the Swaraj Party as a faction of the Congress, in which C R. Das took the leading part. The main feature of the party's programme was to carry on the nationalist fight into the legislature and make it impossible to carry on the government on the basis of the Government of India Act, 1919. Although defeated in his first attempt to have his programme accepted by the Congress, within months Das had a considerable majority in the parent body, and in his home province his faction had complete control over the Congress hierarchy to the extent that Congress in Bengal meant the Swaraj Party. The very few Gandhians there could hold little or no influence over

the party machinery. The situation changed in Das's favour when Gandhi was in jail. Coming out the latter gauged the power of the Swaraj Party and accepting for the moment his own defeat as decisive, surrendered to the Swarajists. The Congress returned to the old constitutional methods. During the very short span of his leadership Das made an attempt at uniting the awakened revolutionary forces of the Congress with the older trimmings of constitutionalism. Along with organisation of labour and peasantry Das put before his party volunteers a programme of election campaign that helped them to present the party's political views to the various sections of the population. This was certain to rouse their consciousness in political affairs as also their national identification. However much Gandhi liked to criticise the nationalists of Bengal for making political use of labour, it would have been impossible to bring them under the Congress without such efforts, and their participation in the nationalist struggle could never have been achieved unless Congress volunteers sided with them tenaciously in their struggles against their traditional enemies. As was witnessed in later years, Congress failure to sympathise with the labourers' problems led them away to the people and party with a different socio-political ideology. It was Das's able statesmanship and leadership for which his province enjoyed a unity that she would never get back in future. Besides bringing the masses under the Congress, he assembled under his canopy the quarrelling revolutionary *samitis*, even the separatist Muslims. Some modern writers have found in his unity efforts games of political opportunism. But they perhaps fail to understand that what he aspired to get through pacts and compromises with different elements of the body politic was a unity that was indispensable in a fight against foreign imperialism, and if there is any opportunistic elements in it, it is not for his personal

interest but for meeting the powerful political enemy. Acts of violence committed by the revolutionaries were suicidal for the country, for these were retaliated by the government with greater violence, often leading the loss of personal freedom of the people of the country. Das led those misguided young men along the right course and found outlets for their energy in social, humanitarian and municipal works. Had not the government taken the offensive in introducing the Bengal Ordinance of 1924, Das could well put in check the revolutionary outbursts as he was able to do in 1921-22. Gandhi's attitude was totally disquieting. His zeal for rescinding the original Gopinath Saha resolution set at naught all Das's efforts by generating a sense of insult in the revolutionaries.

Das's pact with the Muslims met with the same fate due to the obstinacy of some members of the Congress Working Committee. Later, however, the congress could not but sanction privileges like separate electorate, reserved seats and weightage on minority to get over the determined opposition of the Muslims, though only a few years earlier Das's stand on the same line was rejected. Not only that he did not get the party strength of the Congress behind him; the Congress behaved in a very unwise way to spoil the harvest of his personal tact and ability in his deals with the Muslims. Much of the fragility of Das's pacts and alliances² would have been made sound and solidly conducive to national interest had he got the cooperation of the Congress. The revolt against Gandhi's leadership that was declared by the Bengal Swarajists, created a tradition, to which Gandhi's reaction was sharp and uncompromising. The vicious circle thus created continued till the total annihilation of the revolting wing and a firm capture of the highest congress executive by the Gandhi-led faction

which ably thwarted every attempt of Bengal to solve her problems in her own way.

Das's death was followed by the complete reversion of Bengal's role in national leadership. Bengal, so long used to occupy a front seat in determining the policies of the Congress, was suddenly pushed to the back seat with little say in the party. Das, fully conscious of the dangers of alienation from the mainstream, successfully kept Bengal afloat but after his death there was none to pull up and the result was Bengal's comparative political isolation. Das's death brought about a noticeable change in Gandhi's attitude towards the Bengalis. By 1925 he secured a sound footing in the congress with a number of able and faithful lieutenants; the country had been adapted to his programme and leadership, and he did not have to rely much on Bengal's cooperation. After Das's death Gandhi's severe criticisms of and the unsympathetic behaviour to the Bengali revolutionaries created between them an unbridgeable gulf. No wonder that the British government heaved a sigh of relief at Gandhi's strong denunciation of the revolutionaries, who posed a common danger to both the government and Gandhi's non-violence. This may help to explain the bureaucratic policy of soft pedalling with the Gandhians and strong, almost brutal handling of the revolutionaries.⁸

In the thirties Gandhi and the Bengal revolutionaries, who proved to be the best soldiers of Gandhi's regiment in Das's time, were at daggers drawn. Gandhi could not, or did not secure their cooperation and his persistent criticisms alienated them completely. His pact with Viceroy Irwin ingrained in them a conviction that Gandhi would like to see them crushed under bureaucratic repression. Although very few people at large of Bengal had been directly involved in the revolutionary organisations, they had all out regard and sympathy for the revolutionaries.

Gandhi's unsympathetic behaviour to these dedicated selfless young men led to distrust of Gandhi as the leader and to erosion of faith in non-violence in Bengal. It cannot be claimed however that all cross-sections of Bengal's population had accepted methods and objectives of the revolutionaries. But the length and breadth of the province was thoroughly convinced of the selflessness and genuine patriotism of these persons and any insult or insinuations against them was taken as one inflicted on Bengal herself. This sentiment of the province was most poignantly reflected through the great poet Rabindranath, who on all calculations was a cosmopolitan and humanist.⁴ Another feature which perhaps makes an interesting study in the sociological and ideological background of Bengali thinking is that the Bengali Hindu mind has in general a tendency to the *Sakta* cult. *Vaishnavism*, though not rare, has not made much dent in changing this psychological trend. As a result non-violence has been rather an alien creed to the Bengali intelligentsia which controlled politics at that time. The creed of violence of the revolutionaries was considered to be quite natural and Bengal never gave up this attitude. So Gandhi's non-violence fell almost on deaf ears in Bengal.

Side by side with the revolutionaries another section of radical elements in Bengal politics made an open revolt against Gandhian leadership. By that time knowledge of political science had considerably advanced by contact with Marxism, introduced in the country by M. N. Roy, V. N. Chattopadhyay and Dr. B. N. Datta, and in the new light of class struggle Gandhi's Bardoli decision of 1922 was not unexpected and so as a leader Gandhi, a representative bourgeois, was not dependable. They adjudged Gandhi to be the spokesman of the Indian business community and tried to convince the people that little could be expected

from him in the interest of the common people if it clashed with business interests. There was a continuous ideological struggle between Gandhi and the Communists. While Gandhi advised class peace and collaboration, and maintenance of unity in the nationalist body, the Communists interpreted these moves as reactionary and against the interests of the labour and peasantry. By the mid-thirties the Communists secured an able and firm footing in mass leadership at the expense of the inactivated congress. It was by itself an evidence of the proliferation of the ideas of class struggle much to the dislike of Gandhi. In this field also Gandhi evinced signal failure to read the writings on the wall.

Despite the chagrin of the leader class-consciousness struck its roots among the masses. In Bengal leaders belonging to the Muslim community, though themselves were opposed to Marxist theories, utilised the situation to their own advantage. To the multitude of the Muslim peasantry of eastern Bengal they focussed the congress from the angle of a peasant-landlord relation, in addition to the very common communal angle. Gandhi had begun his career as the national leader by lending support to the extra territorial loyalty of the Indian Muslims. But throughout the struggle for independence, the Muslims in general hardly showed any urge for national unity or liberation, their demands having been to maintain their separate identity and wrest as much privileges as possible from the nationalists before the withdrawal of the British from the country. It was a clear manifestation of their intention that even after transfer of power they would not lose their identity as Muslims and yet share the ups and downs with the nation at large. How Gandhi could compromise with such demands when the main burden of his advice to the people and the Congress had always been to maintain the integrity

of the Congress, was difficult to explain. His pacts with the Muslims giving them undue concessions and helping them to maintain their separatist tendency added fuel to the fire in Bengal. Already being the majority in Bengal's population, the Muslims got so much weightage in reserved seats and separate electorates that the Bengali Hindus were reduced to a hopeless minority in all public bodies. It had been a policy of the bureaucracy since 1905 to throttle the politically conscious Bengali Hindu for their militant trends by reducing them to a negligible minority and Gandhi's concessions in 1932 virtually helped the British government in realising the cherished end. Bengali Hindu population lost all hopes in Gandhi for bringing about a Hindu-Muslim accord; on the otherhand, his characterization as the betrayer of Hindu interests was loudly vocal. The Muslims identified the Congress with the oppressive landlords and *mahajans* with whom the peasants, mostly Muslims, were so painfully familiar, and that doomed any possibility of Muslim cooperation with the Congress. The communal situation in Bengal became more desperate when the last chance of a Congress-Huq alliance was frustrated by the unexpected mandate of the Congress High Command not to form any such coalition in Bengal. The decision opened up the inroad of the Muslim League in Bengal which had so long been powerless in the province because Fazlul Huq with his overwhelming influence on the Bengali Muslims was not ready to ally with the non-Bengali leadership of the All-India Muslim League. Gandhi and the Working Committee failed to gauze the subtle balance of the communal relations and by the unwise decision referred to above, alienate both the Hindu and Muslim populations of Bengal. Gandhi failed to evince either the sympathy or the statesman's foresight in regard to the communal susceptibilities in Bengal. Probably in this respect, in shaping the communal relations

in Bengal, the mandates of the Gandhi-led Congress had done the greatest harm with far-reaching effects. It is an irony of fate that the provinces of Bengal and Punjab who fought so hard for retaining their own integrity, had to pay the penalty for the miscalculations of the Congress leadership. Admittedly, the leader of the Muslim League, Jinnah, adamant and uncompromising in negotiations, but neither Gandhi nor other leaders of the Congress could deny their responsibility in the conversion of Jinnah from an ardent nationalist to a fanatical adherent to the partition of India. "No Muslim leader was more genuine in endorsing the national demand than Jinnah was in the twenties"—writes a contemporary journalist. "His vanity was somewhat hurt by the preference shown by Gandhiji and the other Congress leaders for the Ali Brothers."⁵ Congress leaders did not take note of Jinnah's changed attitude when for the first time he put forward a claim for reservation of seats in all the provincial legislatures including Muslim majority provinces like Bengal and Punjab during the All-Parties Committee meeting at Delhi in 1928. The Congress added insult to Jinnah's injury when in the 1937 elections the Congress swept the polls and dropped the idea of Congress-Muslim League coalition, negotiated before the elections. The League suffered a major reverse in the Muslim majority provinces, but many of its candidates in Bombay and U. P., who were all former congressmen, won. "Jinnah now expected the Congress to reward his nationalism by forming a coalition with the league in these two provinces and thereby giving his party a national identity", commented Durga Das. When the Congress insisted that the Leaguers should first endorse the Congress platform, Jinnah's prestige suffered a major blow and he started attacking the Congress as a Hindu fascist body.⁶ Even Gandhi, so keen on Hindu-Muslim unity in the national struggle, failed to measure the evils

these controversies were going to produce. By launching on a policy of divide and rule through the grant of separate electorates to the Muslims Viceroy Minto had put a brake on the nationalist movement which culminated in the partition of the country following decades of infight and controversies, demand and concessions and communal holocausts.

Subhas Bose and M. N. Roy had been the two persons who carried on incessant criticisms of Gandhi as a political leader. In the late thirties, Gandhi-Subhas conflict reached a point of no return. Bose has always been critical of Gandhi's weak and compromising policy towards the British. The impending war crisis in Europe sharply polarised their differences about the role of India in the war. Gandhi's open advocacy for British imperialism generated widespread hatred against him in the minds of radical Congressmen and with them Bose set to building up his own left-oriented leadership. He severely criticised those who, with Gandhi's support, agreed by way of compromise with the British, to the proposal of a Federation for India. Were it accepted it would have demolished any prospect of national unity in future India with the Princes as components of the Federation, holding fast to maintain their separate identity. Bose's personal view for going to the extent of securing Facist Powers' help against British imperialism was however equally severely criticised by the pro-Gandhi bloc. These crucial differences led to the ousting of Bose from Congress Presidentship in 1939 by the pro-Federation Patel group, while Gandhi master-minded the behind-the-scene coup. In fact, after Das's death, which was followed in quick succession by Lajpat's and Motilal's, there was none to deter Gandhi from his dictatorial posture. With all his vigour and enthusiasm Bose lacked the personality and

pragmatism of his mentor Das and so failed either to cause any chink in the Congress as Das had done or spur Gandhi to some positive action. Bose's ouster from the Congress was regarded in Bengal as insult to the people at large and to the leftists as ejection of all left elements from the Congress.

Bengal's challenging disposition towards the Gandhiled Congress and Gandhi's mounting reaction to counter it reached the climax in the expulsion of Bose from the Congress. The result was disastrous for Bengal. All the centrifugal forces raised their heads to create political turmoil in the province. Torn by factions, rivalries and communal conflicts, Bengal seemed to lose all interest in the nationalist struggle. The running of two sets of Congress committees and numerous events of election disputes brought about a total discredit to the Congress in Bengal. Election disputes or disputes over issue of delegate cards were incidents of common occurrence in all provincial Congress committees, but nowhere did these touch such a low level as in Bengal. The Working Committee's propaganda with fabrications against the non-official BPCC, led by the Bose brothers, did not only discredit the said body but resulted in abysmal hatred and dislike of the all-India leadership. The process was complete when Sarat Bose, on the allegation by the Working Committee of misappropriation of money, published a bunch of letters involving many in the Working Committee. Estranged from the mainstream, it was a piece of misfortune that Bengal was not in a position to formulate a system of her own as her great leader had done in the twenties. Early in 1941 Bose left the county, frustrated in his endeavours to carry the Congress with him, to try alone to secure the Axis Powers' help in emancipating India. Disowning Gandhi and his ways, losing Bose and his guidance, young Bengal found itself in utter confusion.

— It is not so easy to make a neat summing up of events

in history. So complex is the nature of social and political conditions of a country and so diverse are evidences that sometimes one wonders whether objectivity in historical study is possible to be maintained. The charge of selectivity of evidences cannot always be ruled out. But still historians have drawn conclusions since they have to. From the exhaustive discussions made so far on the crucial two decades of Bengal politics the following tends to emerge as the upshot of Gandhi's impact on Bengal politics. One word of caution in this connection is called for. It is not to be supposed that the impact we are talking of has always been a one-way traffic. The influence of historical events are always complementary, though it may not be equally proportionate.

Gandhi's appearance on the Indian scene decidedly changed the character of the Congress Party—from an elitistic organisation to a mass national organisation. The leadership passed from the upper stratum of the society to the enlightened middle class and in Bengal it had a telling effect on the conversion of the Congress from moderatism to militant nationalism. This militancy ultimately converted the Congress creed of Dominion Status to Complete Independence, severing all connections with British imperialism. In shaping this goal of the Congress Bengal perhaps was more responsible than Gandhi. Gandhi's creed of amicable relationship among all sections of people, completely disregarding the theory of class-antagonism, resulted in the business community having a determined say in formulating Congress policies. They gradually replaced the intellectuals and professionals to a substantial extent. Selfless martyrdom gave way to bargaining. This definite tilt in the Congress helped the consolidation of Communist ideas among the intelligentsia and general mass of the country and Bengal in particular which was always askance about Gandhi's real motives.

Gandhi's communal deals were dogged by ill-stars ; these shattered the social, cultural and economic structure of the Bengali society in such a way that the Bengalis could not overcome the impact in decades. As political leaders men who came to replace Subhas Bose had no personality and image of their own, they shone in the light borrowed from Gandhi.

With all admiration for the colossus in which Gandhi is seen in the history of India's emancipatory struggle, I have to close the history of Gandhi-Bengal relations in 1921-41. Though it is not within the purview of this work, it may not be totally irrelevant to mention that while Bengalis were vocal in their criticism of Gandhism, few in Congress leadership cared to honour Gandhi's ideas and principles. On many occasions even Gandhi's favourites like Jawaharlal and Patel disobeyed Gandhi's avowed objectives, so much so that one wonders who was then leading the Congress, Gandhi himself, or in his name the power crazy clique ? To cite a few examples, the Congress accepted ministerial responsibility in 1937 against Gandhi's pronounced dislike. Again, in 1939-40, when Gandhi was pleading for cooperation in British war efforts, the Congress Working Committee resolved not to give any assistance. And finally, when Gandhi was trying hard to resist the partition of India, in their urge for the transfer of power Congress leaders accepted the partition scheme, and even before the finalisation of the negotiations Rajagopalachari passed a resolution in the Madras legislature accepting partition. Gandhi had but to say, "Let me fight my lone battle."

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER ONE

1. M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography* (Ahmedabad, Reprint, 1959), p. 72.
2. Richard Gordon gives convincing proofs of Gandhi's isolation in Indian politics. Quoting *The Leader* Gordon writes: "Motilal Nehru refused to associate himself with the local Satyagraha Sabha, and in March he was pointedly absent from a meeting to welcome Gandhi to the city." Richard Gordon, *Non-cooperation and Council-entry*, Gallagher, Johnson and Seal (Editors), *Locality, Province, and Nation*, (Cambridge, 1973), p. 124 ff.
3. P. C. Bamford, *Histories of the Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movements*, (Government of India, Reprint, Delhi, 1974), p. 8.
4. *ibid*, p. 9.
5. Details of the meeting are in J. M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise To Power, Indian Politics, 1915-22*, (Cambridge, 1972), p. 143. Delegates from U. P. and a majority of those from Madras and Calcutta were in favour of passive resistance, but older leaders like Sir Narayn Chandra-varkar, Sir Dinshaw Wacha, Chimanlal Setalvad, and Surendra Nath Banerjee were firmly opposed.
6. Government of India (G. I.), Home, Poll, file no. Deposit 48 of 1919.
7. My Bengal Diary, 10 April, 1919, Zetland Collection (Microfilm), Vol. 1, Mss, Eur, D. 609.
8. *ibid*.
9. Government of Bengal (G. B.), Poll. Confidential, File no. 395 of 1924. Also, "The persons who attended the meeting on 6 April were chiefly up-country Hindus, Marwaris and Muhammedans, and the absence of Bengali students, who generally form a large element in a Calcutta mass meeting, was remarkable". Report of the Calcutta Police Commissioner, dated 14 April, 1919.
10. H. N. Dasgupta, *Desh-bandhu Smriti*, (Calcutta, 1926). p. 231.

11. Bamford, of cit, p. 14.
12. M. R. Jayakar, *The Story Of My Life*, (Bombay, 1959), Vol. 1, p. 216.
13. *Collected Works Of Mahatma Gandhi* (C. W.), Government of India, Vol. 17, pp. 347-8
14. There was of course a small section of loyalist Muslims, not pledged to the Khilafat cause, as the Nawab of Dacca in Bengal.
15. Brown, op cit, p. 41,
16. Durga Das, *India From Curzon To Nehru and After*, (Calcutta, 1969), p. 73.
17. Cited in Bamford, op cit, p. 5, 135.
18. C. W., Vol. 18, p. 149.
19. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, p. 366.
20. Durga Das, op cit, p. 73.
21. AICC Mss, File no. 13. of 1920.
22. R. Gordon, op cit, p. 137.
23. *Hitavadi* (Calcutta), Editorial, 25 June, 1920.
24. Quoted, R. Gordon, op cit, p. 140.
25. *Bangali*, (Calcutta), 1 August, 1920.
26. Brown, op cit p. 219.
27. Secret I. B. Report, dated 5 August, 1920. The informer commen-
- ted that the Muslims assembled to pass the non cooperation resolution by a majority.
28. *Al-Eslam, Bhadra*, 1327 B. S. (August-September, 1920).
29. *Zamana*, 6 July, 1920 *Mohammadi* also supported non-cooperation.
30. "The Madras delegation had the right to elect 15 delegates, it returned at least 7 Muslims. Bengali had 30 seats on the subjects committee, and in addition 10 as the hosts of the Congress ; Muslims took their share of all these 40 seats." R. Gordon, op cit, p. 144.
31. Javakar, op cit, Vol. 1. p. 393. The author however gives no reason as to how could Gandhi manage the selection of the venue.
32. *The Bengalee*, (Ed. Surendra Nath Benerjee Calcutta), Editorial, 3. August, 1920. Also, I. B. Report, dated 2 August, 1920.
33. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, p. 367.
34. *Indian Annual Register* (I. A. R.), Ed. N. N. Mitra, Calcutta, 1921, Part III, p. 106.
35. Presidential Address at the Calcutta Special Congress.

36. Motilal thought it useless to stand against an overwhelming majority. Dasgupta, *op cit*, pp. 236-7.
37. Brown, *op cit*, p. 266. Jawaharlal did not give any reason for his father's change of mind except some vague reference to his love for Gandhi's personality. He did, of course, record his own instant conversion to the creed. J. Nehru, *An Autobiography* (New Delhi, 1962), pp. 41, 65.
38. Brown, *op cit*, p. 266. Interesting reasons behind Huq's conversion have been suggested by Police reports. One report dated 7 August, 1920, said ; "An interesting incident occurred while the votes were being counted. Shaukat Ali, seeing that Huq was standing at a window went upto him and with mailed fist threatened him with reprisal if he did not support Gandhi. Huq raised his hand." Another report dated 23 August, 1920, suggested that Huq's conversion rested on his conviction that the government was not going to make him a Minister.
39. I. B. Report dated 1 and 5 August, 1920, showed that many ex-detenus were selected as Assistant Secretaries and enlisted as volunteers, while Arun C. Guha was working as a clerk in the Congress Committee.
40. See page 4, n 10
41. This issue will be discussed in the next chapter.
42. Broomfield seems to have overlooked these possibilities and has to some extent been unjust to them by suggesting that they saw Gandhi as a rival in national leadership. National leadership had so far been a joint responsibility of leaders from different provinces and it is too much to suggest a presupposition on their part that Gandhi's elevation to leadership would mark the end of theirs. J. H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict In A Plural Society, Twentieth Century Bengal*, (California, 1968), p. 147.
43. Brown is somewhat hasty I think in her decision that Gandhi "forced Congressmen's hands by making it

- difficult for them to refuse to ratify non-cooperation at the special Congress without going back on what was already happening and thus appearing hesitant in the struggle with the raj". Brown, op cit, p. 266.
44. Jayakar, op cit, vol. 1, p. 396.
 45. S. N. Banerjee to Lajpat Rai, published in *The Statesman*, Calcutta, 30 August 1920.
 46. Dr. S. K. Mallick to Lajpat Rai, ibid, 7 September, 1920.
 47. *The Bengalee*, Editorial, 6 September, 1920.
 48. ibid, Editorial 5 September, 1920.
 49. Quoted in Khalid Bin Sayeed, *Pakistan, The Formative Phase*, (London, 1968), p. 49.
 50. H. K. Sarkar, *Deshbandhu-Smriti*, Bijoli, (Calcutta), 3 July, 1925. Brown has given a qualified support to this statement; "Later it was alleged that Umar Sobhani and Sankarlal Banker gathered in from Calcutta streets over 100 supporters of non-cooperation on ballot day". Brown, op cit, p. 267.
 51. Ronaldshay to Mon-
tagu, Darjeeling, 23 September, 1920, Zetland Coll.
 52. Secret I. B. Report on the subjects committee meeting on 6 September, 1920.
 53. *The Tribune*, (Lahore,) Editorial, 10 September, 1920.
 54. *The Statesman*, (Calcutta), 12 September, 1920.
 55. *The Bengalee*, Editorial, 10 September, 1920.
 56. Sarkar, *Deshbandhu-Smriti*, Bijoli, 3 July, 1925.
 57. On 16 December, 1920, Das and Gandhi met at Dacca where Das argued like that. Dasgupta, op cit, p. 293.
 58. J. Nehru, op cit, p. 64.
 59. P. C. Roy, *Life And Times Of C. R. Das*, (Oxford, 1927), p. 159.
 60. It is difficult to ascertain how many of the Bengal contingent had supported Das. Government reports show confusing statements, while the position adopted by the revolutionary *samiti* members was also confusing. The *Anusilan* members led by Pulin Das went to support Das, but as Das changed his mind, probably

- they withdrew their support. The *Yugantar* members had already been pledged to support non-cooperation and probably they then joined Das.
61. G. I, Home, Political. File no. Deposit 847 of 1922.
 62. *ibid*, Deposit 42 of 1921.
 63. Broomfield, *op cit*, p. 168.
 64. Durga Das, *op, cit* p, 77.
 65. *ibid*, p. 76.
 66. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, (Calcutta), Editorial, 1 January, 1921.
 67. G. I. Home, Poll, File no. Deposit 3 of 1921.
 68. *ibid*, File no. Deposit 35 of 1921.
 69. *I. A. R.*, 1921, p. 138,
 70. G. B., Poll, Confidential. File no. 395 (1-3) of 1924.
 71. *ibid*, File no. 283 of 1921, Report on the National School in Bengal.
 72. *I. A. R.*, 1921, p. 141.
 73. I. B. Report dated 1 February, 1921.
 74. Bamford, *op cit*, pp. 52-3.
 75. Ronaldshay to King George V. 1 June, 1921, Zetland Coll., vol. 1.
 76. My Bengal Diary, *ibid*.
 77. Subhas C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle, 1920-42*, (Netaji Reasearch Bureau, Calcutta, 1967), p. 52.
 78. Dr. Nirmal Kumar Bose, during interview.
 79. Bamford, *op cit*, p. 58. Dange however presents a different view : "..... the A. I. T. U. C. leadership could not take any political stand on the question of *Swaraj* and the political movement for national freedom the A. I. T. U. C. remained almost silent on the national political demand." S. A. Dange, *Origins of Trade Union Movement in India*, (A. I. T. U. C., 1973), pp. 15-16
 80. Bamford, *op cit*, p. 58.
 81. This report of the strike is based on Bamford, *op cit*, pp. 60-62 ; G. I. Home, Poll, Deposit 46, 51 and 63 of 1921. It is unfortunate that Broomfield has based his views on government reports only and has naturally failed to appreciate the nationalists' role. Also, G. B. Poll, Conf, File no. 39 (88-90) of 1921.

82. *The Statesman*, Calcutta, 15-21 May, 1921.
83. The extremely proverty-stricken condition of the coolies has been described by N. C. Bordoloi, Secretary, Assam P. C. C. in his report on the non-cooperation movement in Assam. "A more destitute, down-trodden and ignorant class of people do not exist on God's earth than the Assam tea-garden coolies," he wrote. "They were made to work even by flogging. They were given six rupees pay and rice at the rate of 5 seers per rupee. Out of the pay of 6 rupees deductions were made for absence, illness etc. with the result that on an average the coolies could not earn more than Rs. 2/8 per month." G. B., poll., Conf., File no. 312(1 2) of 1925.
84. These facts behind the coolie exodus and the role of the Bengal Congress have been put forth by Rakhahari Chatterji, C. R. *Das and the Chandpur Strikes, Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. CIII, pp. 81-96.
85. Andrews Mss, quoted *ibid*.
86. Reading to Montagu, 9 February, 1922, published as White Paper.
87. Bose, *op cit*, p 56.
88. Quoted in Buddhadev Bhattacharya, *Satyagrahas In Bengal, 1921-39*, (Calcutta, 1977), p. 10.
89. In response to these appeals six members were said to have resigned. *Nihar*, 26 July, 1921, quoted *ibid*, p. 11.
90. *Nihar*, 8 November, 1921, quoted *ibid*, p. 14.
91. G. B. Poll, Conf, File no. 395 of 1924.
92. I. B. Report on the Non-cooperation Movement in Bengal, 1921-22.
93. G. B., Poll, Conf., File no. 395(1-3) of 1924.
94. Krishnadas, *Seven Months With Mahatma Gandhi*, (Ahmedabad, Reprint, 1961), p. 222
95. *ibid*.
96. G. B. Poll, Conf, File no. 14 of 1922, Addl. S. P., Rangpur to D. 1. G., 12 February, 1922.
97. G. B., Poll, Conf., File no. 100 (7-24) of 1922. Report of the Commissioner, 16 February, 1922.
98. G. B., Poll, Conf., File no. 14 of 1922, D. O.

- Letter dated 6 March, 1922.
99. H. N. Dasgupta, *Subhas Chandra*, (Calcutta, 1964), p. 41.
 100. Bamford, *op cit*, pp. 42-43.
 101. G. I., Home, Poll., File no. 112, 170. 415, of 1921; G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 39 of 1921; D. O. Letter from O'Donell, Secretary, G. I., to all provincial governments, dated 28 January, 1921, Also, D. A. Low, *The government Of India And First Non-cooperation Movement, 1920-22*, R. Kumar (ED.), *Essays In Gandhian Politics* (Oxford, 1971), p. 307.
 102. *The Bengalee*, 17 December, 1921. Manifesto of the Indian Association and the National League; G. B. Poll, Conf., File no. 39(118-128) of 1921.
 103. Bose, *op cit*, p. 66.
 104. Bamford, *op cit*, p. 29.
 105. *ibid*.
 106. Bose, *op cit*, pp. 67-8 In his presidential address at the provincial conference at Barisal B. C. Pal had expressed the fear that when the year would be out and the people would see the British still in possession of the country, that would create deep and wide-spread discontent. His reason seems to have influenced Das.
 107. J. Dwarkadas to Sapru, telegram, 18 December, 1921, quoted in Sapru to Vincent, dated same, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru Papers. Also, Reading to Montagu, Private telegram quoted in Low, *op cit*, p. 310, n.
 108. The Marwari capitalists of Bengal were putting pressure on Gandhi for ending the movement, the reasons will be discussed in the following pages.
 109. I. B. Report dated 13 August, 1921.
 110. Resolution passed on 24 July, 1921, I. B. Bulletin dated 13 August 1921.
 111. I. B. Bullentin for the week ending on 6 August, 1921.
 112. Meeting held on 11 September, 1921, I. B. Bulletin dated 17 September, 1921.
 113. *ibid*, R. Chatterjee's contention that Gandhi stood beside Das in this affair does not seem well-documented. R. Chatterjee,

- op cit, p. 191.
114. I. B. Bulletin dated 17 September, 1921.
 115. Krishnadas, op cit, p. 120
 116. ibid, p. 239.
 117. B. Bhattacharya, op cit, p. 18.
 118. ibid p. 19.
 119. ibid.
 120. G. B., Local Self Government Department (Local Boards), L2U-5 (1), A 36-43, July, 1922. Report of the Joint Magistrate S. N. Roy, dated 1 November, 1921.
 121. Krishnadas, op cit, p. 250
 122. Bose, op cit, p. 57.
 123. C. W., Vol. 21, p. 464.
 124. I. B. Bulletin dated 1 October, 1921.
 125. Conference of the non-cooperators at the Samavaya Mansion, Calcutta, reported by the I. B., dated 19 September, 1920
 126. I. B Bulletin dated 28 May, 1921.
 127. ibid, dated 6 August, 1921
 128. It appears that Gandhi was disinclined to launch the movement at Bardoli. At the AICC meeting at Delhi, 4-5 November, Gandhi was almost forced by "the restiveness displayed by a large proportion of the delegates against his shyness of declaring mass civil disobedience" to announce that he hoped to start civil disobedience personally at Bardoli on 23 November. But the matter was shelved temporarily on the plea of the disorders arising out of the Prince's visit. The second postponement was when Malaviya asked Gandhi to wait till the Round Table Conference was over and he readily agreed. The third pause was at Jinnah's request, and lastly he decided to withhold on the evening before the scheduled date of starting the agitation on the plea of the Chauri-Chaura incident. The striking feature in his moves was that after receiving the news of the tragedy he had sent his second rejoinder to the Viceroy informing the firmness of his intention. After a second thought, about a week later, he changed his decision. Did he thus save himself from mass movements? The government commented: "Gandhi was faced by the difficulty, after having brought the pot to boil, of keeping it boiling without allowing it to boil over . . . the Chauri-Chaura incident gave Gandhi the requisite excuse. . ." Bamford op cit, pp. 68-70.

129. *I. A. R.*, 1921, p. 146.
130. Subhas C. Bose, *An Indian Pilgrim*, (Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, 1965), pp. 180-6. Hemanta K. Sarkar, *Deshbandu-Smriti*, (Calcutta, 1931), pp. 12, 28-9. G. B., Poll, Conf., File no. 93(1-13) of 1921, 195 of 1922.
131. Reading to Montagu, op cit.
132. *ibid*.
133. A C.I.D. Bulletin dated 17 December, 1921, showed that only 30 constables resigned on 16 and 17 November, 1921.
134. Reading to Montagu, op cit.
135. Presidential Address at Nagpur, *I. A. R.*, 1921, Part III, p. 43.
136. *ibid*, p. 140.
137. Jayakar, op cit, Vol. 1, p. 344.
138. *I. A. R.*, 1921 p. 148.
139. My Bengal Diary, Zetland Coll. Vol. 1.
140. G. I. Home, Poll., File no. Deposit 41 of 1921.
141. Andrews, to Gandhi, Bolpur, 19 February, 1921, Gandhi Samgrahalaya, New Delhi,
142. *Modern Review*, (Ed. Ramananda Chatterji) Calcutta, February, 1921.
143. *I. A. R.*, 1921, p. 141.
44. *Modern Review*, February, 1921, p. 221.
45. *I. A. R.* 1921, p. 141.
146. *The Bengalee*, 8 July, 1921, news item.
147. Broomfield, op cit, 149-50.
148. *The Bengalee*, 26 October, 1920, Editorial.
149. *I. A. R.* 1921, Part III, p. 98.
150. P. C. Roy, op cit, p. 232.
151. *Letters to a Friend*, Rabindra Nath Tagore to C. F. Andrews, *Modern Review*, March, 1921, pp. 612-15.
152. *C. W.* Vol. 20, pp. 162-3. *Young India*, 1 June, 1921.
153. H. K. Sarkar, *Deshbandhu-Smriti*, *Atmasakti*, 26 June, 1925 Sir P. C. Roy later joined the khadi group and established the Bengal Chemical as a national effort.
154. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 112 of 1924.
155. The student volunteers of Bengal in their ardent zeal for national work took up as day labourers, as hawkers of kerosene oil and such other things. One of their leaders, Hemanta Sarkar, who described himself to be a true proletariat, as one without a shel-

- ter to live, regretted that their enthusiasm was not properly utilised. Sarkar, *Deshbandhur sange purba-bange, Masik Basumati, Sravan*, 1332 B. S., (July-August, 1925). Das also spoke proudly of the volunteers, of their spirit of sacrifice, absolute selflessness and indomitable energy with strict adherence to party discipline. Dasgupta, *Deshbandhu-Smriti*, (Calcutta, 1926), p. 28.
156. *Modern Review, Student Unrest* (Editorial), February, 1921, p. 231.
 157. *The Benglee*, Editorial, 2 July, 1921. Banerjee hinted at Gandhi's claim that if one crore of rupees be collected for the Tilak Swarajya Fund, he would bring swaraj within one year.
 158. *Rolland Gandhi Correspondence* (Government of India, 1976), p. 62, Extracts from Rolland's diary, 21-29 June, 1926.
 159. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Letter to the editor, 14 January, 1921.
 160. *The Bengalee*, 6 September, 1920.
 161. *ibid*, 17 July, 1921.
 162. *Jayakar*, op cit, Vol. 2, p. 67.
 163. Tagore to Kalidas Nag, May, 1922, cited in *Rolland-Gandhi Correspondence*, p. 8.
 164. B. C. Pal to Motilal Nehru, quoted in Broomfield, op cit, p. 147.
 165. *Rolland-Gandhi Correspondence*, p. 61. Rolland seems to have understood the difference of a Bengali mind and that of Gandhi. He sought to justify Gandhi from his own point of view: "It is natural that this mixture of holiness and politics should often shock you. In reality it is not a mixture but a juxtaposition of these two different orders." Rolland to Kalidas Nag, Villeneuve, 19 October, 1925, *ibid*, p. 49. R. Gordon has found in it Gandhi's "device of cloaking essentially practical decisions in a parade of moral scruples". R. Gordon, op cit, p. 127.
 166. B. C. Chatterjee, *Gandhi And Aurobinda*, (Calcutta, 1921), p. 9.
 167. *Bombay Chronicle*, 10 July, 1921.
 168. *The Bengalee*, Editorial, 13 July, 1921. The allegation was not baseless. The Congress

- recommended Wardha cotton for spinning. Jamnalal Bajaj being the monopoly-holder of Wardha cotton, raised the price to Rs. 2/-per seer and made a profit of crores of rupees. His allegiance to the Congress creed can best be understood by the very fact of sending his own son to England for education when the Congress had resolved to boycott British academic institutions in India. Notwithstanding, he was the proud donor of lakhs of rupees to the Swarajya Fund and was its treasurer.
169. C. I. D. Bulletin dated 17 September, 1921. According to the report Gandhi avoided answering the question.
170. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 7 August, 1921, Editorial.
171. Andrews to Gandhi, Bolpur, 19 February, 1921. Gandhi Sam-grahalayaya.
172. Rolland to Kalidas Nag, 19 October, 1925. *Rolland-Gandhi Correspondence*, p. 49.
173. Extracts from Rolland's diary, 18-19 February, 1925, *ibid*, p. 44.
174. Andrews to Gandhi, *op cit*. Broomfield suggests that these leaders were holding "much of Bengal's land and a significant share of its wealth", therefore they disliked any change in the social pattern. Das's doubt about village reconstruction, he believes, was largely born of a fear of the unknown. Broomfield, *op cit*, p. 154.
175. G. B., Freedom Movement Papers, Serial No. 75-80, File No. 292 of 1919. Also, K. Mcpherson, *The Muslim Microcosm, Calcutta, 1918-35*, (Wiesbaden, 1974), p. 57.
176. *ibid*, p. 58. Also, Freedom Movement Papers, File no. 472 of 1919. According to Police reports the *hartal* on 1. 8. 1920 was partially successful in the districts because the Hindus were not sympathetic to the strike.
177. *ibid*.
178. *The Bengalee*, Editorial, 18 March, 1920.
179. V. K. Ramanujachari's letter, quoted in *The Bengalee*, 25 May, 1920.
180. "It appears that the Khilafat agitation is going to end in smoke, mainly because the

- Turks have accepted the peace terms generally. Whom is then the agitation meant for?" *Nayak*, 1 July, 1920. Also, "The Turkish Sultan and the *Khalifa* of the Muslims has given assent to the making over of a large part of his dominions to the Allies. It is now to be considered whether it is proper for Indian Muslims to demand what the Sultan himself has given up." *Sanjivani*, 29 July, 1920.
181. *The Bengalee*, Editorial, 18 March, 1920.
182. Extracts from Rolland's diary, 21-29 June 1926. *Rolland-Gandhi Correspondence*, p. 61.
183. Jayakar, op cit, Vol. 1 p. 388.
184. *C.W.*, Vol. 20, pp. 165, 291, *Young India*, 1 & 29 June, 1921.
185. Quoted in Bamford, op cit, p. 168.
186. *C.W.*, Vol. 20, p. 59.
187. Quoted in Bamford, op cit, p. 183.
188. *ibid*.
189. *India in 1921-22*, A report prepared by Rushbrook Willams for the Government of India.
190. The Aga Khan urged the government "to restore to Turkey immediately and fully her sovereign rights in Anatolia and Asia Minor" and thus put an end to the unrest among Indian Muslims, Quoted in Bamford, op cit, p. 184.
191. *ibid*, p. 164.
192. The compromising section was represented by *Islam-Darsan*. Mustafa Nurul Islam, *Bengali Muslim Public Opinion As Reflected in Bengali Press, 1901-30*, (Dacca, 1973), p. 66, f. n.
193. Bamford, op cit, p. 190.
194. *ibid*, p. 191, n.
195. Quoted, *ibid*, p. 193.
196. *The Leader*, (Lucknow) 15 March, 1922, Letter to the Editor.
197. Al Faruk, *Ashoyoger Abasan, Islam Darsan, Agrahayan*, 1331 B. S. (November-December, 1924).
198. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 54.
199. C. Sankaran Nair, *Gandhi and Anarchy*, (Madras, 1922), p. 124.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p 70.
2. Stories of police atrocities can be found in the reminiscences of freedom fighters
3. The I. B. reported 40 disturbances which occurred at various places in 1921. Special mention was made of the riots at Malegaon (Bombay), Aligarh, Bombay city and the Moplah rebellion. Calcutta experienced an unfortunate disturbance on 12 April, leading to stone-throwing at the D. C. Headquarters' car and wounding the Assistant Commissioner Mr. Cook. One sergeant was injured and the car that brought reinforcements was overturned and set on fire. Three European officers and three Indian firemen were injured by stone-throwing. Troops from the Fort William had to be called to pacify the mob of Marwaris, Bhatias, Jains and up-country Hindus and Muslims. Chief Secretary, G. B. to Secretary, G. I., cited in R. Kumar, *op cit*, pp. 325-343.
4. Krishnadas, *op cit*, pp. 226-8. The I. B. Report dated 11 March, 1922, also recorded that all parties reconciled to the Delhi resolutions with the exception of a few Bengali extremists like Satyen Mitra and Majid Baksh, Secretary, Bengal Provincial Khilafat Committee.
5. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Editorial, 14 February, 1922. Others like *Nayak*, 14 February, and *Hindusthan*, 14 February also expressed disappointment at the decision, while *Mohammadi*, 16 February, and *Dainik Basumati*, 13 February, urged not to be overwhelmed in despair. As expected, the Moderate organ *The Bengalee*, 15 February, appreciated the decision.
6. Quoted, N. K. Bose, *Gandhism and Modern India* (Gauhati University Lectures, 1970) p. 237.
7. *ibid*.
8. Bamford, *op cit*, p. 75.
9. Basanti Devi to Gandhi, Presidency Jail, February, 1922, cited in *Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das Centenary Volume*, Calcutta, 1976.
10. The *Akali* Sikhs started non-violent non-cooperation against the corrupt 'Mohants' of

the Sikh, *Gurudwaras*. The Government intervened in favour of the vested interests, the *Mohants*, who were living a disreputable life at public expense. The *Akalis* had been arrested and mercilessly beaten, but after a year of Satyagraha, they had their demands fulfilled through legislation. Satyagraha by *Akali* Sikhs was resumed in 1924 to reform other *Gurudwaras*. Carrying of national flag was prohibited in certain streets at Nagpur. Congress volunteers took up this prohibition as a case for Satyagraha and made it an all-India issue. Ultimately the government came down and yielded to popular demands.

11. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, News item, 2, 10 May, 1922.
12. AICC mss. File no. 8 of 1922.
13. R. Gordon, op cit, p. 136.
14. C. R. Das, *The Way To Swaraj*, (Madras, 1923), pp. 127-8.
15. Cited in R. Gordon, op cit, p. 140. Lajpat's plea was that if elected to the Council they will

have to cooperate with men like Bosworth Smith and others who were guilty of the shameless atrocities at Punjab. When the Punjab wrongs became one of the vital issues for his Satyagraha, Gandhi included boycott of Councils in his non-cooperation programme.

16. L Gordon, *Bengal, The Nationalist Movement, 1870-1940*, (Delhi, 1974), p. 172.
17. Report of the Police Commissioner R. Clarke, 20 March, 1922.
18. Durga Das op cit, p. 96.
19. J. Nehru, op cit, p. 27.
20. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 78 Das's fellow prisoners included Bose, Shyam Sundar Chakravarti, Jitendra Lal Banerji, Badshah Mian, Abul Kalam Azad and Chand Mian. Chakravarti had a bitter controversy with Das over this matter.
21. *ibid.*
22. A. K. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, (Delhi, 1972 ed.), p. 14.
23. AICC Mss. File no. 13 of 1920.
24. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Editorial, 2 July, 1920.;

- The Bengalee*, Editorial, 7 July, 1920.
25. *Zamana*, Editorial, 6 July, 1920.
 26. Natarajan to the Secretary, Girgaum DCC, 1 July, 1922, quoted in Jayakar, op cit, Vol. 2, p. 17.
 27. The 1919 Constitution had provided for elected members of the provincial legislature to be appointed as Ministers in charge of certain departments under the head "Transferred Subjects". The appointment of Ministers was subject to their commanding a majority support in the House, as the decision of the Council was above everything, even the discretionary power of the Governor (in case of Transferred Subjects).
 28. AICC Mss., File no. 8 of 1922.
 29. Jayakar, op cit, Vol. 2, p. 41.
 30. AICC Mss. File no. 13 of 1922.
 31. *Basanti* (Calcutta), 21 October, 1922; similar articles in *Banglar Katha*, 20, 22 December, 1922.
 32. *Basumati*, 28 October, 1922.
 33. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, news item, 2 May, 1922.
 34. *ibid*, Editorials, 19, 24 April, 1922.
 35. *Dainik Basumati*, Editorial, 1 November, 1922.
 36. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 7 November, 1922.
 37. *Al-Kemal*, 24 December, 1922. Almost all Muslim papers denounced Council-entry before the formation of the Swaraj Party.
 38. *Anrita Bazar Patrika*, 8 November, 1922.
 39. *Dhumketu* (Calcutta), 20 December, 1922.
 40. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, News letter from Jagadish C. Sengupta, Asansol, 19 July, 1922.
 41. *ibid*, news item, 26 July, 1922.
 42. *Banglar Katha*, 22 December, 1922.
 43. Extracts from Das's presidential speech at Gaya.
 44. Extracts from Das's speech at the AICC meeting at Gaya.
 45. R. Gordon, op cit, p. 150.
 46. Broomfield, op cit, p. 235.
 47. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Editorial, 10 January, 1923.
 48. H. N. Dasgupta, *Deshabandu Chittaranjan Das*,

- (Government of India, 1970), p. 114
49. G. I., Home, Poll., File no. 25 of 1923.
 50. *ibid.*
 51. *The Servant*, Editorial, 16 February, 1923.
 52. Das to Motilal, 5 May, 1923, AICC Mss. File no. 1 of 1923.
 53. G. I., Home, Poll., File no. 25 of 1923.
 54. *ibid.*
 55. *ibid.*
 56. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 6 July, 1923.
 57. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Editorial, 1 July, 1923.
 58. Bamford, *op cit*, p. 87. The resolution forbade any propaganda by Congressmen among voters in furtherance of the Gaya Congress resolution relating to the boycott of Councils.
 59. Jayakar, *op cit*, p. 131.
 60. *ibid*, quoted.
 61. Extracts from Azad's Presidential Address at the Delhi Special Congress, 15-16 September, 1923. From 15 August onwards the BPCC ran two separate organisations, and two sets of delegates appeared at Delhi from Bengal. Azad decided in favour of the Swaraj Party and admitted only the 750 delegates sent by Das. Bamford, *op cit*, p. 91.
 62. AICC Mss. File no. 3/4 of 1923.
 63. It is interesting to note that the resolution was moved by Rajagopalachari himself. He was, subjected to much criticism by no-changers who took it to be a case of betrayal.
 64. Quoted, Bamford. *op cit*. p. 88.
 65. AICC Mss. File no. 1 of 1923.
 66. Broomfield, *op cit*, p. 242. His views are identical with those expressed in G. I., Home, Poll., File no. 25 of 1923.
 67. Rajat K. Roy, *Non-cooperation Movement in Bengal, Journal of the I.E.S.H.R.*, p. 367. Chakravarti unsuccessfully tried to persuade the revolutionaries not to join the Council-entry party and that ended his connections with the revolutionaries. Yadu Gopal Mukherji, *Biplabi Jibaner Smriti*, (Calcutta, 1968), p. 485.
 68. R. Gordon, *op cit*, p. 150: "Although he had lost in Calcutta, Das was not prepared to allow Gandhi to run the Congress as he chose." Also, B. B. Misra, *The*

- Indian Political Parties*, (Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 216.
69. J. Gallagher, *Congress in Decline, Bengal, 1930-33*, Gallagher, Johnson, Seal, (Eds) op cit, p. 227.
 70. In the Central Assembly the Swarajists secured 42 seats out of a total of 105. In the C. P. Council they were 40 in 54, in U. P. 31, Bombay 32, and Assam 13 out of 101,86 and 36 respectively ; besides they had their allies among Independents.
 71. Reports of Local Governments on the working of the Reformed Constitution, 1923-4.
 72. Bamford, op cit, p. 92. Das's 30 May speech has been cited in this work, p. 79.
 73. Bamford, op cit, p. 92.
 74. Das's relations with the Muslims will be discussed later.
 75. *The Statesman*, Editorial, 1 December, 1923.
 76. Das to Lytton, Calcutta, 16 December, 1923, published in all contemporary newspapers.
 77. Mallick was the first Indian non-official Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation
 78. Earl of Lytton, *Pundits and Elephants*, (London, 1942), p. 45.
 79. ibid.
 80. *Bandemataram*, 26 March, 1924 ; *Dainik Basumatl*, 26 March, 1924.
 81. Lytton to Birkenhead, Calcutta, 31 December, 1924. Birkenhead Papers (Microfilm).
 82. *Forward*, 2 April, 1924.
 83. Lytton-Reading-Birkenhead Correspondence, Birkenhead Papers.
 84. Broomfield, op cit, p. 245.
 85. V. J. Patel in *Forward*, 23 April, 1924.
 86. G. I., Home, Poll., File no. 25 of 1924.
 87. Lytton to Birkenhead, 20 November, 1924, Birkenhead Papers.
 88. ibid.
 89. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, pp. 95-6.
 90. Communique On Revolutionary Crime in Bengal, 1924. G. I. Home, Poll, File no. 379 of 1924.
 91. Arun C. Guha, *Aurobindo And Jugantar*, (Calcutta, 1975), p. 58.
 92. Fortnightly Reports of the Bengal Government, G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 25 of 1925.

93. Das to Motilal, op cit.
94. Bamford, op cit, p. 88.
95. The Char Maniar Satyagraha (1923-5) has been described in details by Buddhadev Bhattacharya, op cit, pp 300-320. The money spent by the government "to preserve the prestige of an ordinary Sub-Inspector" amounted to Rs. 75,000. ibid, p. 320. Also P. C. Roy, op cit, p. 205.
96. Fortnightly Reports of the Bengal Government, G. I., Home, Poll., File no. 25/1923, 25/1924, 112 of 1921.
97. Extracts from the Presidential Address at Gaya.
98. Published in *The Statesman*, Calcutta, 27 March, 1923.
99. *Young India*, 9 February, 1921.
100. This was his pronounced opinion on many occasions, cf. *Is India Different?* Gandhi-Saklatvala Correspondence, published by the Communist Party of Great Britain, London, 1927; also, *C. W.*, passim, Chapter four of this work has been devoted to the Gandhi-Congress-Communist entanglement over mass organisation.
101. *Banglar Katha*, 23 December, 1922.
102. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 21 of 1923.
103. ibid.
104. P. C. Roy, op cit, p. 197.
105. "The words of Sir P. C. Roy and Sir Asutosh cause us to regret that had this energy been spent on establishing a separate educational institution free of governmental control, things would have been far better", wrote *Dainik Basumati*, 4 December, 1922. *The Modern Review*, *Bande Mataram*, *Nayak*, *Viswamitra*, *Hindustan* joined the row.
106. Details of Tarakeswar Satyagraha are to be found in B. Bhattacharya, op cit, pp. 81-118. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, pp. 100-101. *IAR*, 1924, vol. 1, p. 671. About the Tarakeswar Satyagraha Gandhi said that he knew next to nothing. But he specifically disapproved the acts of railwaymen in blocking rail-tracks, which he said was not only not satyagraha, but also discreditable. *C. W.* vol. 14, pp. 178-9, 566.
107. Anil Baran Roy was originally a no-changer,

- but later he joined the Das group. The reason of his conversion is not known, excepting a hearsay evidence that he was advised by Sri Aurovindo to join Das.
108. L. Gordon has proved beyond doubt Das and Bose's non-complicity in the revolutionary programme; op cit, p. 194, also note, pp. 345-346.
 109. Extracts from Das's speech at the Congress at Coconada, quoted in Jayakar, op cit, vol 2, p. 176.
 110. "Das was furious and said he would wash his hands of all-India politics and confine his activities to Bengal",—reported Durga Das, op cit, p. 114.
 111. *Kaunsil Probesh* (editorial), *Choltan*, 1 June, 1923.
 112. *Hindusthan*, 28 December, 1923.
 113. *Bande Mataram*, 25 December, 1923.
 114. Mohamed Ali announced during the Congress that he had received a 'psychic message' from the Poona jail about Gandhi's assent to Das's Council-entry proposals. P. C Roy, op cit, p. 197, f. n.
 115. *C. W.*, vol. 23, p. 413; also, Gandhi to Mohamed Ali, 7 February, 1924, cited in A. Tripathi. *Gandhi's Second Rise to Power, Indian Politics, 1924-29, The Calcutta Historical Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1977, p. 137.
 116. Durga Das, op cit, p. 115.
 117. Cited in AICC Mss., File no. 15 of 1925, the date is illegible, c. 23 May, 1924.
 118. Gandhi to Rajagopalachari, 15 September, 1924, *C. W.*, vol. 25, p. 149.
 119. Durga Das, op cit, p. 116 Also, Tripathi, op cit, pp. 136-7.
 120. Gandhi seemed to have considered Das's request not to upset the Delhi compromise before a joint deliberation. Das to Gandhi, 18 April, 1924, *C. W.*, vol. 25, p. 576.
 121. *ibid*, p.,310.
 122. *ibid*.
 123. Reading to Birkenhead, 1January, 1925. Birkenhead Papers.
 124. Same to same, 20 November, 1924, *ibid*.
 125. *ibid*.
 126. Quoted, Durga Das, *op cit*, p. 116.

127. Quoted, Jayakar, op cit, vol. 2, p. 320.
128. *C. W.*, Vol. 24, p. 332.
129. Quoted, Jayakar, op cit, Vol. 2, p. 320.
130. A. Tripathi, op cit, pp. 137-8.
131. *C. W.*, Vol. 25, p. 297. He repoarted this view on many occasions, pp. 289, 311, 486.
132. Quoted, Jayakar, op cit, Vol. 2, p. 572.
133. Durga Das, op cit, p. 117.
134. *Forward*, 20 June, 1925.
135. Quoted, Jayakar, op cit, Vol. 2, p. 582.
136. Gandhi to Motilal Nehru, 19 July, 1925. M. Nehru Papers.
137. Jayakar, op cit, Vol. 2, p. 587.
138. Gandhi to M. Nehru, op cit.
139. Durga Das, op cit, pp. 117-8,
140. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Editorial, 10 January, 1925.
141. Stanley Jackson to Birkenhead, Darjeeling, 25 April, 1927, Birkenhead Papers.
142. Irwin to Birkenhead, Delhi, 5 April, 1928. ibid.
143. G. I., Home, Poll, File no 112/IV of 1926.
144. Durga Das, op cit, p. 118.
145. J. M. Sengnpta to M. Nehru, Calcutta, 17 July, 1928 ; S. C. Bose to same, Calcutta, 18 July, 1928. J. Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, (Bombay, 1960), pp. 61-2.
146. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 4/19 of 1933.
147. *C. W.*, Vol. 57, p. 388 ; also, Gandhi to J. Nehru 14 April, 1934. J. Nehru papers.
148. G. I., Home, Poll., File no. 3/6 of 1934.
149. *The Statesman*, Delhi, News Head-line, 2 April 1934.
150. L. Gordon, op cit, pp. 219-20.

CHAPTER THREE

1. Revolutionary Pamphlet, written probably by Sachindra Nath Sanyal, organiser of the U. P. Anusilan Samiti, and widely circulated in Bengal, U. P, Punjab, in January, 1925, cited in H. W. Hale, *Terrorism In India, 1917-36*, (Government of India, Reprint, 1974), Appendix 3.

2. Arun Chandra Guha, *First Spark of Revolution*, (Orient Longman, 1971), p. 129.
 3. Narayan Banerji, *Biplabi Sandhane*, (Calcutta, 1967), p. 29.
 4. Guha, op cit, pp. 117-8.
 5. ibid, p. 32.
 6. Sedition Committee Report, pp. 51, 105.
 7. G. I., Freedom Movement Papers, File no. 5-31/67, p. 2.
 8. Unsophisticated village women named Dukari Bala Devi and Nanibala Devi were prosecuted for carrying pistols and communicating news from a political prisoner. Satish Pakrashi, *Agniyuger Khata*, (Calcutta, 1971), p. 127.
 9. Hale, op cit, p. 9.
 10. Guha, op cit, p. 95.
 11. Mustafa Nurul Islam, op cit, pp. 55-6 n.
 12. Muzaffar Ahmed, *Myself And The Communist Party of India*, (English translation by Prabhas K. Sinha, Calcutta, 1970), p. 12.
- Recently this theory of Muslim antipathy towards revolutionary terrorism has been challenged. In an article entitled *Banglar Biplabi Andolane Mussal-*
- man in the Chittagong Uprising Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, Kalipada Biswas shows that the Bengali Muslims had their own revolutionary organisations and a person no less renowned than Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was one of the organisers. Quoting secret police reports Biswas says that Azad established a theosophical college (Dar-ul-Irshad) for Muslim revolutionaries of Bengal. The college curriculum followed Aurobindo Ghosh's 'Gita class' at the Murari Pukur house. Land was purchased for the college building in the Belgachia area. This society organised a united Hindu-Muslim revolutionary army. pp. 38 ff.
13. Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, (Delhi, 1972), p. 4.
 14. "Arm-chair patriotism will no longer suffice," declared a revolutionary organ. "The day is past when the highest object in the life of the political leaders was to become a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. But that sort of counterfeit patriotism will not be tolerated now." *Bijoli* 7 January, 1921. This

- is why they decided to join the Congress.
15. Guha, op cit, pp. 10-11. Temperance, female education, abolition of dowry, widow remarriage abolition of the rigours of caste distinction were also included in their programme. Some of the landlords associated with the samiti advocated the rights of the Namasudras of their villages to enjoy the services of washermen and barbers. *ibid*, pp. 221-3. Also, A. C. Guha, *The Story of Indian revolution*, (Allied Publishers, 1972), p. 21.
 16. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. Deposit 41 of 1921.
 17. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. Deposit 35 of 1921.
 18. "At a secret meeting during the time of the Bengal Provincial Conference they agreed to work in the Non-co-operation movement for a year". L. A. Gordon *Bengal, The Nationalist Movement, 1870-1940* (Delhi, 1974). p 176, also n. p. 342. The meeting was held in Das's house and Das requested the revolutionaries to stop violence altogether at least for one year. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 60 ;
 - Yadugopal Mukherji, op cit, p. 479.
 19. B. K. Dutta, *Biplabi Gandhi o Bharater Bip-labandolan*, Sailesh K. Banerji (ED.) *Gandhi Parikrama*, (Calcutta, 1970), p. 270.
 20. *ibid*, p. 262.
 21. Y. G. Mukherji, op cit, p. 452.
 22. Secret I. B. Report, dated 1.8.1920 and 5.8.1920.
 23. Y. G. Mukherji, op cit, p. 452.
 24. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. Deposit 42 of 1921, A detenu was a suspect of the police. kept under detention without trial ; while a prisoner was one against whom charges were framed and tried by the Government.
 25. *ibid*.
 26. I. B. Bulletin for the week ending on 10 September, 1921.
 27. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. Deposit 41 of 1921.
 28. Ronaldshay, My Bengal Diary, Zetland Coll.
 29. N. C. Banerji, *At The Crossroads*, (Calcutta, 1950), pp. 300-1.
 30. Many of the articles of Banerji's *Unapanchasi* (Calcutta, 1930) were first published in the above-mentioned journals.

The appreciation has been recorded in the reminiscences of the revolutionaries, and is still remembered by aged people.

31. *Hindusthan*, 13 July 1921.
32. *ibid*, 16 July, 1921.
33. *ibid*, 22 September, 1921.
34. *C. W.*, Vol. 19, p. 102.
35. *ibid*, p. 122.
36. *I. A. R.*, 1921, Part III, p. 171.
37. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 314 ; N. Banerji, *op cit*, p. 54 ; Pakrashi, *op cit*, p. 207.
38. *I. A. R.*, 1921, Part III, p. 171.
39. *ibid*.
40. N. Banerji, *op cit*, p. 54. The old revolutionary describes that the captain of the Bengali volunteers' team, Sachin Sanyal was hit on his head by a stick. So fifty chosen 'delegates' with sticks in their hands left for Nagpur where they made use of their sticks on Maharashtrian volunteers. Also, G. I. Home, Poll, File no. Deposit 41 of 1921.
41. Bibhuti Sarkar, who had just returned from the Andamans, was appointed as a Tax Collecting Officer of the Calcutta Corporation. Satish Chakravarti, a volunteer of the Tarakeshwar Satyagraha and Upen Banerji were also given jobs under the corporation,
42. AICC Mass, File no. 8-9 of 1924
43. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 379 of 1924.
44. *ibid*.
45. *ibid*.
46. See Chapter 2 of this work.
47. Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, *Smritikatha, Masik Basumati*, Sravan, 1332 B. S. (July-August, 1925).
48. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 379 of 1924.
49. B. K. Datta, *Biplabi Gandhi &c.* pp. 276-7 ; also, *C. W.* Vol. 25, p. 276.
50. *Prabartak*, January, 1923. Kanai Lal Datta was a convict in the Alipore Conspiracy Case, who murdered approver Naren Goswami in the jail.
51. Hale, *op cit*, p. 15.
52. *ibid*.
53. N. Banerji, *op cit* p. 79 ; Y. G. Mukherji, *op cit*, p. 480 ; Ananta Singh, *Agnigarbha Chattagram*, (Calcutta, 1968), p. 219.
54. Gopinath Saha was a member of the *Yugantar*.

- He was working as an assistant in the Saraswati Library, established by Monoranjan Gupta and Arun C. Guha.
55. Hale, op cit, p. 18. Also, G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 379 of 1924.
 56. *ibid*.
 57. *Forward*, 2 March, 1924.
 58. N. Banerji, op cit, p. 87.
 59. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 379 of 1924, minute on revolutionary movement in Bengal.
 60. *I. A. R.*, 1925, Vol. 1, p. 87.
 61. *ibid*.
 62. Hale, op cit, p. 19.
 63. *ibid*, p. 20.
 64. *I. A. R.*, 1925, Vol. 1, pp. 174-6.
 65. Hale, op cit, p. 21.
 66. *ibid*, the arrested persons were Sachindra Chakravarti and Probodh Dey.
 67. The basis of this identification was a note in the same phrasing found in Sanyal's diary when he was arrested in 1925, *ibid*, p. 191.
 68. *I. A. R.*, 1925, Vol. 1, pp. 174-6.
 69. The story of the execution is written vividly in N. Banerji, op cit, pp. 2-8. Also, Y. G. Mukherji, op cit, pp 510-12.
 70. G. I., Home, Poll, File no, 133 of 1930, Minute on revolutionary crime and terrorism.
 71. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, News item, 5 July, 1928.
 72. Kalipada Biswas, *Yukta Banglar Sesh Anhyay*, (Calcutta, 1966), p. 89.
 73. *C. W.*, Vol. 25, pp. 288-9.
 74. *ibid*, p. 276.
 75. *ibid*, p. 277.
 76. J. M. Sengupta to Motilal Nehru, 3 August, 1925, AICC Mss, File no. 28 of 1925/26 (Sengupta's personal file). Sengupta urged that the Swaraj Party should support Fazlul Huq's election as the President. By the measure there would be a loss of vote on the government's side, while the Swaraj Party would gain by the alliance of all East-Bengal Muslim M. L. Cs, as also of those Muslim members who did not want any Hindu to become President.
 77. N. Banerji, op cit, p. 87, also, G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 4/21 of 1932 for Sasmal's strained relations with the Karmi Sangha.
 78. M. Nehru to T. C. Goswami, Allahabad, 12 January, 1926, M. Nehru

Papers.

79. Bose's association with the revolutionaries through the Swaraj Party made the government suspicious about him. Alongwith the revolutionaries he was arrested in 1924 under the Bengal Ordinance. From that day *Yugantar* leaders like Surendra Mohan Ghosh decided to invest in Bose the party's all-India leadership. Eventually Bose came to be regarded as such. See N. Banerji, op cit, pp. 93-4, 142.
80. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 4/21 of 1932, Alliance of Congress with Terrosism in Bengal.
81. ibid.
82. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 133 of 1930, Minute on Revolutionary Crime and Terrorism.
83. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 4/21 of 1932.
84. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Editorial, 3 August, 1928.
85. J. Nehru to N. C. Banerji, 29 March, 1929. AICC Mss., File no. G-64 of 1929.
86. Dr P. C. Ghosh to J. Nehru, 16 November, 1929. AICC Mss., File no G-2 of 1929.
87. Telegram dated 17 November, 1929, AICC Mss., File no. G-2-4 of 1929, (Dr. Pattabhi's personal file).
88. J. Nehru's note to the BPCC and the revolting DCCs, AICC Mss., File no. G-64 of 1929.
89. AICC Mss., File no. G. 120 of 1929.
90. *C. W.*, Vol. 42, p 375.
91. See for the scene behind the Calcutta Congress N. Banerji, op cit, pp. 146-7.
92. A letter from Subhas Bose speaks for itself how by the promise of a fight Gandhi was able to retain his leadership. "People (in Bengal) are feeling more and more sure that Mahatmaji will come back to active service and take the lead next year. His repeated statements that after the 31st December he will become an 'independencewallah', have helped him to win the confidence of the younger and more youthful section, who formerly regarded him as an inveterate and incorrigible 'Dominion Status-wallah'. Bose to J. Nehru, 29 July, 1929, AICC Mss., File no. G-40 of 1929, Part I.

93. *C. W.*, Vol 42, pp. 361-2.
94. *The Philosophy Of The Bomb*, Manifesto of the Hindusthan Socialist Republican Association, Cited in Hale, op cit, Appendix 3, pp. 199-208.
95. *ibid*, pp. 201-2.
96. *ibid*, p. 203.
97. *ibid*, p. 204.
98. *ibid*, p. 206.
99. *C. W.*, Vol. 42, pp. 360-1.
100. *ibid*. "The present movement is directed towards independence whereas that of 1921 was directed towards the redress of the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs and the attainment of Swaraj within the empire if possible and without if necessary. The boycott is confined this time only to the legislatures, but civil disobedience including the no-tax campaign is common to both as also truth and non-violence," Gandhi said in comparison.
101. B. K. Datta, *Biplabi Gandhi &c.*, pp. 280-1.
102. Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy, *Bharatje Sasatra Biplab*, (Cuttack, 1970), p. 325. Pakrashi, op cit, p 186. I. B. Report mentioned a schism between the young "hot-heads" and "older and more experienced leaders". It mentioned the formation of a "New Violence Party" by the seceding faction of the *Anusilan*. Hale, op cit, pp. 21, 26.
103. AICC Mss, File no. C-120 of 1929.
104. AICC Mss., File no. P-6 of 1927 (the year of the file is confusing). The centres named were Shyamganj in Ghatal, Neela in Diamond Harbour, Kalikapur, Champahati, Pealy and Mahishbathan in Canning, Uluberia and Shyampur in Howrah, and Noakhali.
105. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 248 of 1930.
106. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/V of 1930.
107. *ibid*.
108. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 248 of 1930, Report of the D. M., Peddie, on Civil Disobedience in Midnapore.
109. *ibid*.
110. *ibid*.
111. *ibid*, Lowman's note to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal.
112. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/11 of 1930.
113. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 248/11 of 1930.

114. G. I., Home, Poll File no. 14/20 of 1931.
115. *I A. R.*, 1930, Vol. 1, p. 37.
116. G. I. Home, Poll File no. 14/8 of 1931.
117. Sapru to Irwin, Allahabad, 20 April, 1930, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru Papers.
118. Hale, op cit, p. 27.
119. This report of the raid is based on Hale. op cit, pp. 27-31. G. I., Home, Poll. File no. 18/V of 1930 ; Satish Pakrashi, op cit, pp. 193-6 ; Ananta Singh, op cit, pp. 326-354.
120. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/V of 1930. Fortnightly report of the Bengal Government for latter part of April.
121. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 4/21 of 1932, Note by R. E. A. Roy, 25 January, 1932, on Alliance of Terrosism and Congress in Bengal.
122. Hale, op cit, pp. 35-36.
123. *ibid*.
124. *ibid*, p. 38.
125. Press Interview, Lahore, 1 January, 1930. *C. W.*, Vol. 42, pp. 360-1.
126. *ibid*, p. 423, *Young India*, 23. 1. 1930.
127. *ibid*. p. 435. *Young India*, 30. 1. 1930.
128. *ibid*, Vol. 43, Preface, p. x.
129. *ibid*, Vol. 45, p. 272.
130. *ibid*, Vol. 42, pp. 341-2, Speech at the Congress session at Lahore, 31 December, 1929.
131. Bhagat Singh was a Punjabi revolutionary, who belonged to the Hindusthan Socialist Republican Association. He was accused in the Lahore Conspiracy Case for the murder of Saunders, Assistant Superintendent of Police.
132. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 212.
133. A note written in Bengali bearing this message was found in the person of the assailant. Two convicts were killed in police firing in the Hijli Jail.
134. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 45/III of 1934.
135. G. B., Poll, Conf. File no. 345(1-17) of 1931. D/O letter, D. M., Bakharganj to Commissioner, Dacca Division, 23 June, 1931 ; D/O letter, Commissioner, Chittagong to Chief Secretary, G. B., 16 June, 1931 ; Commissioner, Dacca Division, to Chief Secretary, G. B., 27 June, 1931 ; D/O

- letter, D. M., Midnapore, Bakharganj, Mymensingh, 16 June, 18 June, 19 June, 1931.
136. *ibid*,
137. G. B., Poll, Conf. File no. 345(18) of 1931, Note dated 9 June, 1931,
138. Revolutionary Pamphlet, cited in Hale, *op cit*, Appendix 3, pp. 199-202.
139. *CW*, Vol 45, p. 307.
140. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, (Bombay, 1952), Vol. 3, p. 74.
141. *Young India*, 30 July, 1931.
142. *ibid*.
143. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 229 of 1932.
144. Manifesto of the Revolutionary Party.
145. Review of Political Situation in Bengal, July, 1937, India Office Records. (IOR)
146. *ibid*, November, 1937.
147. Brabourne to Linlithgow, Calcutta, 21 December, 1937, I. O. R.

CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 Andrews to Rabindranath, 28 October, 1920, Andrews Papers, Viswa-Bharati
2. Brown, *op cit*, p. 352.
3. Sukomal Sen, *Working Class Of India*, (Calcutta, 1977), p. 140 "Forty-one jute mills owned by the Europeans with a total capital investment of £ 6 million, recorded profits of nearly £ 23 million for the four years from 1918 to 1921 in addition to £19 million carried over to the reserve fund." The author further showed that 33 jute mills paid 200 percent dividends to the share-holders.
4. Quoted, *ibid*, p. 141.
5. Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, p. 334.
6. U P. Kishan Sabha Secretary to the General Secretary. AICC, AICC Mss, File no. 2/1919. The letter said that the Congress had incurred a loss of Rs. 7000 by this measure.
7. AICC Mss. File no. 13/1920.
8. *Young India*, 11 August, 1921.

9. *ibid*, 11 June, 1924.
10. *ibid*.
11. Gautam Chattopadhyay, *Communism And Bengal's Freedom Movement*, (Peoples' Publishing House, 1970), Vol. 1, pp. 1-5. *Bengal Spectator*, Calcutta, August, 1843 ; *Somprakash*, 26 May, 1862, quoted *ibid*.
12. G. Chattopadhyay recorded that the Bengali intellectuals were influenced by radical, republican and utopian socialism at the very beginning of the twentieth century. *Somprakash* hailed the formation of the First International ; the Paris Commune found its echoes in the poems of Sivnath Sastri. Virendranath Chattopadhyay was present as an observer in the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart, Germany, in 1907. *ibid*, pp. 9-10.
13. G. Adhikari, *Documents Of The History Of The Communist Party, 1917-22*, (Delhi, 1971), p. 157.
14. *ibid*, p. 231, the list is based on the documents found by Dr. Devendra Kaushik in the Taskent Archives
15. Sometimes in the first decade of the twentieth century Abani Mukherji went to Germany when his contact with the German Socialists attracted him towards Socialism. Nalini Gupta was an expert in making bombs and explosives among the Bengal revolutionaries. He escaped to Berlin where he became a communist and a devout admirer of M. N. Roy. According to G. Chattopadhyay, Abani was sent by Virendranath and B. N. Datta. G. Chattopadhyay, *op cit*, p. 58.
16. *ibid*, p. 187.
17. Copy in Home, Poll. File no. 110 of 1920.
18. M. N. Roy, *Memoirs*, (Bombay, 1964), p. 369.
19. Y. G. Mukherji, *op cit*, p. 483.
20. Muzaffar Ahmed, *op cit*, p. 78.
21. *ibid*, p. 79. Also, Satish Pakrashi, quoted, G. Chattopadhyay, *op cit*, p 146.
22. G. I., Home, Poll., File no. 21/1 of 1924. The basis of this statement is Ahmed's confession to the police after his arrest in 1923. But, for reasons unknown, Ahmed, in his autobiography denounced Nalini Gupta as

- police agent, also disclaimed any influence that Gupta held over young Ahmed.
23. Cecil Kaye, *Communism In India*, (G. I., Reprint, 1971), Vol. 1, p. 69.
 24. G. Chattopadhyay, op cit, pp 63-4.
 25. Secret I. B. Report, dated 21 August, 1924.
 26. Report of interviews with Chandra and Pakrashi in G. Chattopadhyay, op cit, pp 63, 146.
 27. Interview with B. K. Datta.
 28. Satish Pakrashi, op cit, p. 99.
 29. Quoted, M. N. Roy, *The Future Of Indian Politics*, (London, 1926), p. 23.
 30. M. N. Roy, *Memoirs*, pp. 28-29.
 31. *Basanti*, 21 October, 1922.
 32. B. N. Datta, *What Is Our Aim ?*, *Sankha*, 30 October, 1922.
 33. G. I., Home, Poll., File no. 25 of 1923.
 34. Y. G. Mukherji, op cit, p. 277.
 35. *Bangavani*, Asvin, 1330 B. S., (September-October, 1923).
 36. Dange and Namboodiripad had also joined the non-cooperation movement; after its failure they formed the 'Radical Group'.
 37. Evelyn Roy's letter to a Paris correspondent, cited in Cecil Kaye, op cit, pp. 6-7
 38. Roy, *Memoirs*, pp. 545-8.
 39. Overstreet and Windmiller, *Communism In India*, (Berkeley, 1959), p. 47.
 40. Quoted, M. Ahmed, op cit, pp. 138-147.
 41. M. N. Roy, *India In Transition*, (Bombay, 1971), pp 205-7.
 42. *The Vanguard*, (Ed. M. N. Roy), No. 3, 15 June, 1922.
 43. M. Ahmed, op cit, p. 198.
 44. Satish Pakrashi, op cit, p. 151.
 45. Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar, *Amar Biplab Jijnasa*, (Calcutta, 1973), p. 92.
 46. Ahmed, op cit, p. 312.
 47. *ibid.*
 48. Roy to Dange, 7 September, 1922, quoted, S. Chaudhuri, *Peasants' And Workers' Movements In India*, (Delhi, 1971), p. 135.
 49. *Deshbandhu Chitta Ranjan, A Collection Of*

- His Speeches*, (Calcutta, 1926), pp. 9-10.
50. Quoted in Overstreet and Windmiller, op cit, p. 47.
 51. *I. A. R.*, 1923, Section III, pp. 857-9.
 52. J. Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 61.
 53. S. Chaudhuri, op cit, p. 105.
 54. The dualism in Das's speeches about the labour world may be explained in the context of the divergent interests in his party. His Gaya and AITUC speeches were influenced by the extreme radical views of his secretary H. K. Sarkar, while his party's election manifesto aimed at winning the election, where the voters represented the propertied class.
 55. Quoted, M. N. Roy, *The Future Of Indian Politics*, p. 53.
 56. *ibid*, Preface.
 57. M. Ahmed, op cit, p. 279. Also., Overstreet and Windmiller, op cit, p. 49, — "The British Police intercepted 540 copies, but admitted that a large number got through."
 58. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 25 December, 1922; *Banglar Katha*, Mussal-
 - man*, 29 December, 1922.
 59. Roy's letter to Das, Kanpur Case Evidence, Exhibit no. 19, p. 38.
 60. Documents obtained on the arrest of communist leaders in October, 1925. Copy in Home, Poll, File no. 232 of 1926.
 61. Dange, *Origin Of The Trade Union Movement In India*, (Delhi, 1973), p. 55.
 62. I. B. Bulletin dated 7 May, 1921.
 63. Secret I. B. Report, dated 13 August, 1921.
 64. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 25 of 1923
 65. Upendra Nath Banerji, *Nayak*, 23 November, 1922.
 66. G. Chattopadhyay, op op cit, p. 64.
 67. *Dhumketu*, 13 October, 1922.
 68. Roy to M. Ahmed, 19 March, 1923, Exhibit no. 28 in the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case.
 69. *Socialist* (Bombay), Editorial, 16 September, 1922.
 70. Roy to M. Ahmed, Berlin, 13 May, 1923, Exhibit no 35 in the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case.

71. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, News item, 8 March, 1923.
72. G. I. Home. Poll, File no. 25 of 1923.
73. The dates of the conference have been taken from G. Chattopadhyay, op cit, p 95. They vary with the dates given by Muzaffar Ahmed.
74. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 4 April, 1928
75. *Masses Of India*, (Paris), February, 1926.
76. *Langal*, 7 January, 1926.
77. M. Ahmed, op cit p. 416.
78. S. N. Tagore, to M. Ahmed, Berlin, 17 January, 1928, intercepted and kept in C. I. D. (I. B.) Files.
79. Didarul Alam to M. Ahmed, Rangoon, 28 November, 1927, ibid.
80. Muhammed Serajur Rahman to M. Ahmed, 6 February, 1926. ibid. Coming out of jail Muzaffar Ahmed was very ill and found himself in acute want of money. The number of intercepted letters of Soumyen Tagore in I. B. files goes to prove that his money never reached Ahmed. Dire necessity might have been one of the reasons for Ahmed's alliance with the Congress.
81. M. Ahmed to Joglekar, 26 February, 1926, ibid.
82. M. Ahmed to Philip Spratt, 2 July, 1927, quoted in I. B. Report dated 19. 10. 1927.
83. M. L. Sarkar to M. Ahmed, 19 November, 1927. Intercepted and kept in C. I. D. (I. B.) Files.
84. S. Tagore to M. Ahmed, Berlin, 29 November, 1927, ibid.
85. *Rolland-Gandhi Correspondence*, pp. 284-5.
86. *Atmasakti*, 24 August, 1928. *Ganavani*, 23 August, 1928.
87. G. Chattopadhyay, op cit, p 104.
88. Review of political situation by Moberly, Member-in-charge of Political Department, and Colson, Commissioner of Police, Calcutta. G. B., Secret Booklet no. 48, file no. missing. Also, N. Banerji, op cit, p. 142.
89. I. B. Report dated 28 December, 1927.
90. Satyabhakta to M. Ahmed, 5 March, 1926; copy in C. I. D. (I. B.) Files.
91. Report of the Royal Commission on Labour, 1931, pp. 324-5.

92. "In fact it was not a problem of loss which the millowners were confronted with, but it was the reduction in the amount of super-profits"-commented S. Sen, op cit, p. 243.
93. In the year 1927, 54 strikes occurred in Bombay, 34 in Bengal ; 165, 062 working days were lost in Bombay, in Bengal 464, 889 and in Madras 19 strikes with 187, 441 days lost. In the year 1928, 3½ million working days were lost.
94. M. L. Sarkar to M. Ahmed, 6 December, 1927, copy in C. I. D. (I. B.) Files.
95. Singaravelu Chettiar to M. Ahmed, 23 November, 1927, *ibid*.
96. The report is based on a letter of Dange to M. Ahmed, 5 December, 1927 ; *ibid*.
97. *I. A. R.*, 1927, Vol. 2, p. 24.
98. S. Sen, op cit, p. 266, table entitled 'Strike in jute mills'.
99. *ibid*, p. 267.
100. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 17 of 1929.
101. **JUTE PRICES-BALES OF 400lbs.**
- | Year | Rs. | As. | Ps. |
|------|-----|-----|-----|
| 1925 | 111 | 9 | 9 |
| 1926 | 98 | 11 | 6 |
| 1927 | 76 | 6 | 0 |
| 1928 | 75 | 0 | 11 |
- The price went down to Rs. 31-11-0 in 1932, whereas in 1910 it was 40-1-10. Report of the Royal Commission On Agriculture, pp, 386-7.
102. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 17 of 1929.
103. Quoted, B. B. Mishra, op cit, pp. 208-9.
104. Presidential Address at the Calcutta Congress, December, 1928.
105. *I. A. R.*, 1928, Vol. 2, 355 6.
106. *ibid*.
107. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 257/1 of 1930.
108. *Liberty*, 10 April, 1928.
109. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, News item, 27 April, 1928.
110. *Liberty*, 18 August, 1929.
111. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Editorial, 3 April, 1928.
112. *ibid*.
113. AICC Mss, File no. G-16 of 1929 ; also, *Liberty*, News item, 12 September, 1929.
114. S. Sen, op cit, p. 239.

115. The Report of the Royal Commission on Labour declared that the government policy was to foster the growth of trade unions on 'correct' and 'sound' lines.
116. S. Sen, op cit, p. 281. The Communist Party of Great Britain, Independent Labour Party of Great Britain, International Federation of Trade Unions, Amsterdam, and the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress sent messages.
117. ibid, p. 283 ; also Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 217.
118. May Day was observed in India in an organised manner from 1927. S Sen, op cit, p. 284.
119. Irwin to Birkenhead, Simla, 19 May, 1927, Birkenhead Papers.
120. Y. G. Mukherji op cit, p. 500.
121. S. Sen, op cit, p. 269.
122. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 216.
123. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 257/1 of 1930. D/O letter from Chief Secretary, G. B., to Home Secretary, G. I.
124. J. M. Brown, *Gandhi And Civil Disobedience*, (Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 100. The Bengal Jute Enquiry Committee estimated that the total value of marketable crops in Bengal fell from an annual average of Rs. 724 million for the decade 1920-21 to 1929-30, to Rs. 327 million in 1932-33. (Report submitted in 1934).
125. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 257/1 of 1930.
126. ibid, D. I. B. Petrie's note to the Home Secretary, G. I.
127. Review of Political Situation by Police Commissioner Colson, op cit.
128. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 257/1 of 1930, Petrie's note.
129. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/3, 18/5 of 1930.
130. AICC Mss, File no. G-120 of 1930 ; G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/2 of 1930.
131. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 24 February, 1931.
132. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 257/1 of 1930
133. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 187 of 1931. Also, Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 233.
134. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/10 of 1931.
135. Bose, op cit. p. 223.

136. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 849(1-9) of 1931.
137. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 839(1-4) of 1931. Note of Superintendent of Police, Murshidabad, on the Berhampore Conference.
138. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/12 of 1931.
139. C. W., Vol. 42, p. 201; *Young India*, 21 November, 1929.
140. *ibid.*, 5 December, 1929, p. 239.
141. Extracts from Rolland's Diary, December, 1931; *Rolland-Gandhi Correspondence*, p. 217.
142. C. W., Vol. 42, p. 242.
143. *ibid.*, Vol. 43, p. 290.
144. Both government and Congress committee reports show that foreign cloth dealers were in no mood to stop selling of their goods. They tried to avoid big markets like Amritsar in Punjab, but transacted business in smaller ones like Fazilka. Various government and AICC reports have been quoted by Sumit Sarkar, *The Logic Of Gandhian Nationalism: Civil Disobedience And The Gandhi Irwin Pact, 1930-31*, *Indian Historical Review*, July, 1976, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 128 ff. In an exhaustive study of the background of the Pact of 1931, he convincingly shows how business pressure played a major part in the settlement. For similar situations in U. P. See Gyanendra Pahde, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, 1926-34*, (Delhi, 1978).
145. Thakurdas to V. J. Patel, 25 July, 1930, quoted in S. Sarkar.
146. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 5/45 of 1931.
147. Quoted, S. Sarkar, *op cit*, p. 141. Also, "The Chamber merchants... asked Birla to impress on Gandhi that the future might be catastrophic if there was no settlement soon," Brown, *Gandhi And Civil Disobedience*, p. 175.
148. S. Sarkar, *op cit*, p. 141. Subhas Bose also mentioned about the pressure put on Gandhi by the business community, "At Delhi, the Mahatma was surrounded by wealthy aristocrats and by politicians who were trying for a settlement", he wrote, "All the moneyed interests desired to see the armistice followed up by a permanent peace." Bose hinted at the assemblage

- at the Karachi session of the Congress of huge number of delegates who were to support the ratification of the Gandhi-Irwin agreement, and who, he believed, were brought by the businessmen's money. The politicians referred to here were the Liberals who had long ceased to hold any influence over nationalist politics. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, pp. 200-202.
149. *ibid*, pp. 198-200. Bose referred to the unwillingness of the Working Committee and of Motilal Nehru towards an agreement at that stage.
 150. *C. W.*, Vol. 45, p. 299.
 151. *ibid*, p. 300.
 152. *ibid*, p. 262.
 153. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 33/1 of 1931.
 154. *ibid*.
 155. *ibid*.
 156. *C. W.*, Vol. 45, pp. 280-1.
 157. Extracts from Rolland's Diary, *op cit*, pp. 219-20.
 158. *I A R*, 1931, Vol. 1, p. 32.
 159. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 230 of 1932.
 160. *I. A. R*, 1931.
 161. S. N. Tagore's interview with Romain Rolland, November, 1933. *Rolland-Gandhi Correspondence*, p. 284.
 162. J. Nehru to Gandhi, 13 August, 1934, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 118.
 163. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/1-18/8 of 1934, fortnightly reports of the Bengal Government.
 164. *ibid*.
 165. *ibid*.
 166. Sapru to Jayakar, Allahabad, 5 July, 1936, Sapru Papers.
 167. Published in *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 19 January, 1935.
 168. *I. A. R*, 1927, Vol. 2, p. 68.
 169. Review of political situation, File no. P. & J. 3190 of 1937, IOR
 170. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 473 of 1937.
 171. Brabourne to Linlithgow, 6 December, 1937, IOR.
 172. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 132 of 1938.
 173. G. B., Communist situation in India, Secret booklet no. 60, file no. missing.
 174. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 473 of 1937.
 175. *ibid*
 176. S. Sen, *op cit*, p. 359.
 177. *ibid*, pp. 366-7.
 178. Bengal Governor's situation reports, Files P & J

- 4773, 1937, 4884 of 1937, 312 of 1938, IOR. Also, G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 473 of 1937, D/O letter from the Commissioner, Presidency Division, to the Secretary, Home Department, G. B., 26 May, 1937.
179. *ibid.*
 180. G. B., Poll. Conf, File no. 228 of 1938. D/O letter from the District Magistrate, Howrah, to Home (political) Secretary, G. B.
 181. File no. P & J, 4773 of 1937, IOR.
 182. File no. P & J, 3190 of 1937, IOR.
 183. File no. P & J, 4984 of 1937, IOR.
 184. Brabourne to Linlithgow 20 January 1938. IOR.
 185. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. W 404 of 1940. Proceedings of a Commissioners' Conference, Darjeeling, 5 October, 1940.
 186. *ibid.*, Annual Report of the Commissioner of Police, 1939.
 187. *ibid.*, Inspector General of Police, Bengal, Report on Police Administration 1939.
 188. AICC Mss, File no. G-40 of 1938. The resolution reads thus :
"The unnecessary and excessive propaganda about 'truth' and 'non-violence' which are only some ethical principles, having no relation to practical politics, though the conditions in the country do not warrant such propaganda, also detracts our fight for freedom".
 189. File no. P. & J, 4773 of 1937, IOR.
 190. *I. A. R.*, 1939, Vol, 1, p. 87.
 191. S. Sen, *op cit*, p. 367.
 192. Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings, 1939, Vol. LIV, No. 7, pp. 262, 253-7. Dr. Suresh Banerji pleaded for at least 42 seats for labour representatives, for there were as many as 6 lacs of labourers in Calcutta.
 193. P. C. Joshi, *Communist Reply to Congress Charges* (Bombay, 1945), Vol. 1, p. 24.
 194. *ibid.*
 195. *I. A. R.*, 1927, Part III, p. 118.
 196. Jayakar to Sapru, 20 August, 1941, Sapru Papers.
 197. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Editorial, 14 April, 1938.
 198. *Hindusthan Standard*, Editorial, 17 January, 1940.
 199. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 452 of 1940.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Syed Amir Hussain, Secretary, Central Muhammedan Association, said in a message to the All India Muslim League session at Delhi, 1910, "They (the Hindus and the Muslims) have both to live together, progress together, and in evil days to suffer together .. National development, even the fulfilment of the dream of self-government, depends on the co-operation of both races in a spirit of unity and concord." A few of the Muslim journals like the *Mussalman* of Bengal used to spread the same ideal. But the general Muslim attitude was apathetic to the nationalist movement and how the nationalist Muslims were harassed and insinuated by their co-religionists, has been illustrated by Abul Hayat, *Mussalmans Of Bengal*, (Calcutta, 1966), pp. 19-20.
2. *Ashraf* means Muslim landed elite in Bengal.
3. McPherson, op cit, p. 3.
4. *ibid*, p. 58.
5. G. B. Poll, Conf, File no. 395 of 1924.
6. *Mohammadi*, 2 January, 1920. "The Sultan of Turkey cannot be the Caliph of the Muslims and that the Caliphate agitation is spurious", Dr. Suhrawardy said.
7. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. Deposit 35 of 1921.
8. R. K. Roy, op cit, p. 359.
9. I. B. Report on Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movements.
10. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 18 October, 1919, News item.
11. *ibid*, 4 December, 1919.
12. Bamford, op cit, p. 145.
13. *ibid*, p. 153.
14. See Chapter I, p. 13, n. 38. of this work.
15. G B, Poll, Conf, File no. 282 of 1920.
16. I.B Report dated 10 October, 1921.
17. I. B. Report on Non-cooperation Movement in Bengal, January, 1921
18. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 395 of 1924.
19. G. B., Freedom Movement Papers, File no. 267 of 1920 also, G.

- B., Poll, Conf, File no. 395 of 1924.
20. I. B. Report dated 19 March, 1922.
 21. Bamford, op cit, p. 165.
 22. Maniruzzaman Islambadi, *Asahayogita o Amader Kartabya, Al-Eslam, Magh*, 1327 B. S., (January-February, 1921).
 23. Secret Police Reports dated 20 May, 1922, 11 March, 16 March, 1922.
 24. I. A. R., 1921, p. 173.
 25. Debajyoti Burman, *Indo-Muslim Relations*, (Calcutta, Undated), p. 103.
 26. Congress Working Committee Resolution September, 1921.
 27. *Sanjivani*, 29 July, 1920 ; also, *Nayak*, 1 July, 1920.
 28. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 395 of 1924, Additional S. P., Midnapore, to Corbett, D. I. G. (I. B.), 27 December, 1921.
 29. Mustafa Nurul Islam. op cit, p. 67.
 30. *Moslem Bharat, Magh*, 1327 B. S., (January-February, 1921).
 31. *Dhumketu*, Editorial, 26 *Aswin*, 1329 B. S., (13 October, 1922).
 32. *Swarajyer Byakhya* (editorial), *Choltan*, 11 *Jyaistha*, 1330 B. S., (25 May, 1923).
 33. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 395 of 1924.
 34. Quoted, Khalid B. Sayeed, op cit, p. 54.
 35. Mc Pherson, op cit, p. 58.
 36. Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Studies In Gandhism*, (Calcutta, 1962), p. 157.
 37. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 25 of 1923.
 38. *Moslem Hitaishi*, 24 November, 1923.
 39. Abdul Wadud, *Haram O Kofar, Islam Darsan, Sravan*, 1327 B. S., (July-August, 1920), *Khelafat O Non-cooperation*, ibid, *Aswin*, 1328 B. S., (September-October, 1921).
 40. Secret Police Report dated 15 May, 1922.
 41. For the provisions of the Pact see chapter two, p. 92 of this work.
 42. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 21 December, 1923.
 43. N. K. Bose, *Studies In Gandhism*, p. 161.
 44. *Choltan*, editorial, 28 *Agrahayan*, 1330 B. S. (December, 1923).
 45. *Islam Darsan, Sravan*, 1331 B. S. (July-August, 1924).
 46. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, editorial, 6 April, 1928.

47. G. B., Freedom Movement Papers, File no. 1 of 1923.
48. Secret Police Report dated 7 September, 1924,
49. Mohamed Abdul Hakim *Bharate Hindu-Mussalman Samasya, Islam Darsan, Aswin, 1331 B. S.* (September-October, 1924).
50. C. W., Vol. 24, p. 479. Young India, 41 July, 1924.
51. Gandhi to G. D. Birla, 11 August, 1924, *ibid*, p. 559. In the letter Gandhi referred to the failure of the Punjabi Hindus to give any chance to the Muslims.
52. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 30 December, 1923.
53. *Bande Mataram*, 18 March, 1924; *Choltan*, 21 March, 1924.
54. *Moslem Hitaishi*, quoted Broomfield, *op cit*, p. 255.
55. *Islam Darsan, Agrahayan*. 1331 B. S. (November-December, 1924).
56. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 17 October, 1923.
57. *Atmasakti*, 27 February, 1924.
58. *Bande Mataram*, 25 February, 1924.
59. *Mohammadi*, 29 February, 1924.
60. *Forward*, 13 April, 1924.
61. A. K. Azad, *A Study Of Deshbandhu Das, Forward*, 18 July, 1925.
62. Al Huq, *Dillir Milan Sabhay Amilaner Bij Bapan, Islam Darsan, Kartik, 1330 B. S.* (October-November, 1924).
63. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, editorial, 6 April, 1928.
64. Chelmsford to Montagu, Calcutta, 18 December, 1919, Montagu Papers.
65. Lytton to Birkenhead, Calcutta, 11 March, 1925, Birkenhead Papers.
66. Same to Same, 26 March, 1925, *ibid*.
67. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 30/1 of 1925.
68. *The Bengalee*, 19 June, 1925.
69. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 11/XXV of 1926.
70. Lytton's Diary, 24 January, 1926, Birkenhead Papers.
71. Irwin to Birkenhead, Simla, 26 May, 1927, *ibid*.
72. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 8A-3, B55-56 of 1925.
73. *ibid*.
74. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 112/IV of 1926.
75. Durga Das, *op cit*, p. 124.
76. There was no unity of leadership... Fervent

- nationalists and old-style moderates were at a discount ; the community was prepared neither for a return to the Congress nationalist fold nor to the old Anglo-Muslim accord ; to win their support prospective leaders had to tread a narrow path between these extremes and concentrate their energies upon the defence of communal interests against both the British and the Hindus." McPherson, op cit, pp. 88-89.
77. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 516(1-14) of 1926 ; D/O letter from Moberley, Chief Secretary, G. B., to J. Crierar, Home Secretary, G. I., 23 September, 1926. D/O letter from Moberley to Haig, Home Secretary, G. I., 4 November, 1926.
 78. Secret I. B. Reports dated 9 & 11 May, 1926.
 79. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 11/XXV of 1926.
 80. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 187 of 1926, note dated 6 August, 1926.
 81. *ibid.*
 82. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 112/IV of 1926. Actually the pact was rescinded in the conference during a temporary absence of President Sasmal.
 83. *ibid.*
 84. *ibid.*
 85. Durga Das, op cit, p. 98.
 86. *ibid.*, p. 124.
 87. *The Englishman*, 28 May, 1926.
 88. Durga Das, op cit, p. 127.
 89. Irwin to Birkenhead, Simla, 29 September, 1927, Birkenhead Papers.
 90. Same to Same, 11 May, 1927, *ibid.*
 91. Marwari Chamber Of Commerce to Secretary, AICC, Telegram dated 23 December 1927. Similar telegrams were sent by Sanatan Dharma Agarwal Sabha and Pabna, Kushtia, Barisal Darjeeling, Nadia and Chittagong district Hindu Sabhas. AICC, Mss., File no. G-64 of 1926.
 92. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, news item, 24 June, 1928.
 93. Bose to Motial Nehru, 5 July, 1928, M. Nehru Papers.
 94. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, editorial, 12 April, 1928.
 95. *ibid.*, news item.
 96. *ibid.*, editorial, 23 June, 1928.

97. *ibid*, news item, 24 June, 1928.
98. *I. A. R.*; 1928, Vol. 1, pp. 136-7.
99. *ibid*, Vol. 2, p. 417.
100. *Liberty*, editorial, 2 January, 1929.
101. *C. W.*, Vol. 43, pp. 118-9.
102. *ibid*, Vol. 41, p. 378.
103. *ibid*, p. 374.
104. *ibid*, Vol. 42, p. 359.
105. *Young India*, 9 January, 1930,
106. *C. W.*, Vol. 43, p. 56.
107. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/7 of 1930. The UPPCC took similar decision 'in order to avoid inflaming communal passions' The Civil Disobedience propaganda and activity were minimal in areas with a high proportion of Muslims. G. Pandey, *op cit*, p. 149.
108. *C. W.*, Vol. 43, p. 55
109. G. I. Home, Poll, File no 18/7 of 1930 ; also, J. M. Brown, *Gandhi And Civil Disobedience*, p. 138 ; Gallagher, *op cit*, p. 320.
110. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/7 of 1930.
111. *ibid*.
112. *Sariyat-e-Islam, Chaitra*, 1336 B. S. (March-April, 1930).
113. *I. A. R.*, 1930, Vol. 1, p. 348.
114. *C. W.*, Vol. 43, p. 307.
115. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/2 of 1930.
116. *ibid*.
117. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 10/4 of 1930 ; Report of the Dacca Disturbances Enquiry Committee. The Bengal Muslim Political Conference held at Chittagong and presided over by Asrafuddin Chaudhuri, Secretary, BPCC., resolved to cooperate with the Congress.
118. A Secret Police Report dated 17 10. 1927 noted that the Hindu Sabha men were gradually getting hold of the BPCC. Its Secretary Dr. J. M. Dasgupta was an active worker of the Hindu Mahasabha and a close associate of Swamis Satyananda and Viswananda. The Dacca Disturbances Enquiry Committee. noted the Hindu Mahasabha as a considerably powerful organisation at Dacca since 1926. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 10/4 of 1930. In U. P. a number of Congressmen defected

- to Malaviya's Independent Congress Party and the communal relations were further embittered. G. Pandey, *op cit* ch. 5.
119. C. W., Vol. 45, pp. 216, 270-1.
 120. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 342 ; also, C. W., Vol. 49, p. 191.
 121. J. Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 370.
 122. Durga Das, *op cit*, p. 163. The bureaucrats collected cuttings from American newspapers with captious criticisms of the fast, presumably to lessen the impact of the affair on Indian office-bearers. The comments collected from the American press hinted at Gandhi's sincerity, at the same time justified the British policy of safeguarding the interests of the depressad classes. "Community of religion had not prevented high-caste Hindus from keeping these millions of their fellow-believers pitifully apart and degraded. Yet attempt to improve their condition by the communal settlement is so wicked and irreligious that Gandhi is willing to die in protest"—wrote the *New York Times*. "He is calling on his fellow aristocrats to resist British decision that would arm Pariah against caste-system", commented *Herald Tribune*. "Gandhi does not question justice of British allocation of representatives to non-Hindu minorities in India", the commentator went on, "but alleges his readiness to starve rather than to see 70 million of his fellow Hindus, who are his social inferiors, granted even relatively small voice in India's Legislative Councils". Newspaper cuttings in G. I, Home, Poll, File no. 35/25 of 1932.
 123. Bose to Sardul Singh, intercepted letter, copy in G. I., Home, Poll, file no. 3/33 of 1940.
 124. J. N. Basu, Prafulla Tagore, H. N. Datta, N. R. Sarkar, T. C. Goswami, B. C. Chatterji, and B. P. Singh Roy to Sapru, 27 January, 1933, Sapru Papers.
 125. Durga Das, *op cit*, p. 171.
 126. Anderson to Linlithgow, Darjeeling, 23 June, 1937, IOR.
 127. The Report of the Dacca Disturbances Enquiry

- Committee noted that the peasants were victims of the world economic depression, while they increased their debts by reckless expenditure on marriages before the Sarda Act was put into force. The lowering of the price of paddy aggravated their indebtedness, while they noticed Hindu mahajans growing richer and richer.
128. Durga Das, op cit, p. 171.
 129. Presidential Address by A. K. Ghuznavi, Bengal Muslim Conference, 9-10 July, 1932.
 130. McPherson, op cit, p. 39.
 131. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 24 September, 1936.
 132. Amalendu Dey, *Fazlul Huq O Pakistan Prasanga* (Calcutta, 1970)
 133. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/VI of 1936.
 134. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/III of 1936.
 135. Sarat C. Bose was ever against separate electorates During the Bengal Pact controversy in the twenties he wrote to his brother ; "Separate electorates must go ; otherwise the question cannot be solved". Subhas Bose, *Correspondence*, (Calcutta 1967), p. 211.
 136. Zetland to Willingdon, 28 June, 1935, Zetland Collection, Vol. 6.
 137. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/6 18/8 of 1936.
 138. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/IX of 1936.
 139. G. B., Fortnightly Report for late January, 1937, File no. missing Election results (1937) in Bengal :

Congress (including Scheduled Castes and Labour)—	54.
Non-Gongress	
Hindus—	42
Muslim League—	40
Proja Party—	38
Independent Muslim-43	
Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Christians —	31
Total—	248
 140. The Collector of Tippera described the work of the Board as disappointing. Similar situations prevailed in Dacca and Khulna districts. File no. P & J, 5455 of 1937, I. O. R.
 141. Jinnah to Gandhi, November, 1937, *I. A. R.*, 1938, Vol. 1, p. 359.
 142. Anderson to Linlithgow, 5 November, 1937 IOR.
 143. *ibid.*

144. Report on Political Situation, File no. P & J, 4773 of 1937, IOR.
145. *ibid.*
146. Review of Political Situation in Bengal, second fortnight, October, 1937, File no. P & J, 5181 of 1937, IOR.
147. Brabourne to Linlithgow, 5 January 1938, *ibid.*
148. AICC Mss, File no. 39 of 1938.
149. *ibid.*
150. *The Star Of India*, (Calcutta), 29 September, 1937.
151. Fortnightly Reports, File no. P & J, 2291 of 1938, IOR.
152. *ibid.*
153. Brabourne to Linlithgow, Darjeeling, 5 May, 1938, IOR.
154. Quoted, Same to same, Calcutta, 20 January, 1938, *ibid.*
155. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/IX of 1939.
156. *ibid.*
157. Anonymous letter to the editor, *Hindusthan Standard*, 6 January, 1939.
158. *ibid*, 2 January, 1940.
159. *ibid*, editorial.
160. Woodhead to Linlithgow, Calcutta, 5 September, 1939. IOR.
161. *Harijan*, 24 February, 1940.
162. Jinnah-Jawaharlal Correspondence, 1938, Published in the *I. A. R.* and all leading newspapers.
163. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 419 of 1940.
164. Hubert (Officiating Governor of Bengal) to Linlithgow, 6 January, 1940. IOR.
165. Sarkar resigned on the passing of a resolution in the Bengal Legislative Assembly saying "No constitution should be introduced without the full consent of the Muslims and other recognised minorities".
166. Hubert to Linlithgow, *op cit.*
167. Jayakar to Sapru, Bombay, 9 May, 1941, Sapru papers.
168. Same to Same, 6 March, 1941, *ibid.*

CHAPTER SIX

1. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 53.
2. *ibid*, p. 82.
3. Bose, *An Indian Pilgrim*,
4. *ibid*, p. 102.
5. L. A. Gordon, *op cit*, pp. 232-233.
6. Bose to Das, cited in *An Indian Pilgrim*, pp. 100 ff.
7. *ibid*, p. 18.
8. Quoted in Dasgupta, *Subhas Chandra*, p. 41.
9. The Governor of Bengal himself could not but praise Bose for his organisation of the flood-relief operations. "I am so proud that I am the father of Subhas," said Janaki Nath Bose. *ibid*, p. 44. Bose's organisation of labour and Gandhi's displeasure have been referred to above in Chapters I and IV of this work.
10. Sarat C. Bose to Subhas Bose, Calcutta, 15 July, 1925, Bose, *Correspondence*.
11. *The Bengalee*, Editorial, 30 June, 1925.
12. *C. W.*, Vol. 35, p. 438.
13. R. C. Mazumdar, Burdwan University Lectures, April, 1965.
14. *Gandhi And Civil Disobedience*, p. 66.
15. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 147.
16. *C. W.*, Vol. 36, p. 147.
17. *I. A. R.*, 1928, Vol. 1, p. 328.
18. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 155.
19. *I. A. R.*, 1928, Vol. 1, p. 101.
20. *ibid*, p. 103.
21. *ibid*, p. 106.
22. "We shall have had a year's warning", noted the Member-in-Charge, Political department, "and we shall only have ourselves to thank if we are caught napping". Review of political situation by Moberley. *op cit*.
23. *I. A. R.*, 1928, Vol. 2, p. 47.
24. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 157.
25. *I. A. R.*, 1928, Vol. 2, p. 361.
26. *ibid*, p. 367.

27. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 17 of 1929.
28. *Liberty*, news item, 4 September, 1929.
29. *C. W.*, Vol. 40. p. 46.
30. *ibid*, Vol. 41, p. 276.
31. *Liberty*, editorial, 7 September, 1929.
32. *ibid*, 5 September, 1929.
33. The exclusion of Indians from the all-white Simon Commission offended the Indian Liberals, and the tenth session of the Liberal Federation under the presidency of Sapru decided to reject the Commission. The Muslims also resolved to boycott it on the same ground and the Muslim League came to an understanding with the Congress on the principle of joint electorate with reservation of seats for Muslims.
34. Newspaper reports.
35. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 16 September, 1922.
36. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 158.
37. Jawaharlal's name was suggested by only three provincial committees. AICC Mss., File no. G-100 of 1929-30. Gopal is of opinion that the AICC reluctantly elected Jawaharlal. S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography*, Vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 127.
38. *C. W.*, Vol. 41, p. 240.
39. Gandhi to Motilal Nehru 6 July, 1929, M. Nehru Papers.
40. Bose to Basanti Devi, 5 November, 1929, *Correspondence*, p. 403, "By putting Jawaharlal, one of the major spokesmen for independence at Calcutta, in the Lahore chair, he (Gandhi) hoped both to use him to heal the cleavages of generation and ideology in the Congress, and also to prevent him becoming a focus and mouthpiece of opposition to a less extreme demand"—opines J. M. Brown, *Gandhi And Civil Disobedience*, pp. 57-8.
41. S. Gopal, *op cit*, p. 128.
42. AICC Mss., File no. G-117 of 1929 ; J. Nehru to Gandhi, 4 November, 1929. J. Nehru Papers.
43. Gandhi to J. Nehru, telegram, 4 November, letters 6 & 8 November, 1929, J. Nehru Papers.
44. M. Nehru, to J. Nehru 7 November, 1929, *ibid*.
45. *C. W.*, Vol. 41, p. 281.
46. S. Gopal, *op cit*, pp. 136-7.

47. Irwin to Birkenhead, 12 December, 1929, Halifax Papers.
48. *C. W.*, Vol. 41, p. 259.
49. *ibid*, Vol. 42, p. 375.
50. *ibid*, p. 469, Brown thinks that the eleven Points "were a publicity enterprise and a means of appealing to and uniting as wide a spectrum of opinion as possible—from financiers and businessmen, discontented taxpayers and cultivators to those who had fallen foul of the C. I. D. They showed Gandhi's sensitivity to the aspirations and needs of the diverse groups he hoped to weld into a unity by leading civil disobedience." Brown, *Gandhi And Civil Disobedience*, pp. 92-3.
51. *Young India*, 27 February, 1930.
52. Telegrams exchanged between Bengal Government and Emerson, Personal Secretary to the Viceroy, copies in G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 5/45 of 1931.
53. *C. W.*, Vol. p. 265.
54. *Liberty*, 31 October, 1931.
55. AICC Mss., File no. P-6/1927, Part 1. The date of the file is confusing.
56. *ibid*, Hemanta K. Basu's letter to the AICC President, 25 September, 1931.
57. *ibid*, telegram dated 17 September, 1931.
58. The Unlawful Association Ordinance was extended over Midnapore where 27 places in the Tamluk sub-division and 14 places in the Contai sub-division were banned for holding any kind of association or meetings. *ibid*, Part II.
59. Krishna Das to Gandhi, 9 February, 1931, intercepted letter, copy in G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 292 of 1931 and K. W.
60. Durga Das believes that it was Bose's group who waved black flags with the slogan "Gandhi go back". Durga Das, *op cit*, p. 147.
61. G. I., Home, Poll, file no. 136 of 1931, government report on the Karachi session of the Congress.
62. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 207.
63. *ibid*, pp. 207-8.
64. *ibid*, p. 208.
65. Brown has made a bold attempt to justify Gandhi's acceptance of the invitation "A reversion to Civil Disobedience appeared impolitic" writes Brown, "since he

had little hope of wide scale support in the country, would alienate many congressmen who wished their views to be presented in London and non-congress Hindus whose sympathy increased his influence with the Government. Moreover, a new campaign would attract swift suppression from the authorities. His decision at Simla, therefore, made considerable sense ; for in London, despite his weakness, he could try his hand alone in negotiation with the minorities and the British without constant pressure from his colleagues." *Gandhi And Civil Disobedience*, p. 241.

66. Emerson's note to local governments on Gandhi-Emerson interview, G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 33/1 of 1931.
67. G I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/IX of 1931. The Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, seemed particularly worried about the Berhampore resolution. In a D/O letter to the Chief Secretary Hopkyns (8 December, 1931), he reported that among those present at the conference were Rajendra Prasad, Nariman and Aney, all mem-

bers of the Congress Working Committee, and all sections of Bengal's congressman besides Subhas Bose's usual adherents. The resolution was according to the Congress reports, adopted unanimously on the motion of Mrs. Urmilla Devi. Nariman assured the conference, noted the Commissioner, that the Working Committee would support the programme chalked out by them and asked the people to 'Bardolise' Bengal and see the wonderful effect". G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 839(1-4) of 1931.

68. Willingdon to Zetland, 13 July, 1935, Zetland Collections.
69. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 238, footnote.
70. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, p. 244 ; J. Nehru, *Autobiography*, pp. 327-8.
71. Durga Das, op cit, p. 162.
72. J. Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 328.
73. K. Kurti, *Subhas Bose as I Knew Him*, (Calcutta, 1965), p. 25.
74. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, pp. 230-1.
75. K. Kurti, op cit, p. 30.
76. Bose's interview in The

- Pester Lloyd*, Budapest, 5 May, 1934; *Dimineatse*, Bucharest, copy in India Office Records, Public & Judicial Department.
77. *ibid.*
 78. Presidential Address read out at the Political Conference of the Indians at London, 10 June, 1933.
 79. Bengal Administrative Report, 1934.
 80. Fortnightly Reports of the Bengal Government, G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/II, 18/IV, 18/VI of 1934. At Jalpaiguri there were only 60 persons in a meeting for Gandhi's reception. There were no large crowd to greet him at the Khargpore Railway Station where he spent 4 hours.
 81. Details in Chapter V.
 82. *Dainik Basumati*, 9 September, 1934.
 83. *Bangali*, Editorial, 12 January, 1934.
 84. Bose, *Indian Struggle*, pp. 305.
 85. Chief Secretary Hallet's letter to provincial governments, G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 3/16 of 1934.
 86. *Indian Struggle*, p. 306.
 87. *The Statesman*, 1 April, 1934, News headline.
 88. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 14 March, 1934; *Dainik Basumati*, 24 March, 1934.
 89. *Gana Nayak*, 18 April, 1934.
 90. AICC Resolutions, June, 1934.
 91. S. C. Bose, *Crossroads* (Calcutta, 1962), p. 47.
 92. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/2 of 1936.
 93. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/5 of 1936.
 94. K. Kurti, *op cit* p. 29.
 95. Extracts from Rolland's diary, April, 1935; *Rolland-Gandhi Correspondence*, p. 323.
 96. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 26 April, 1936; Report of a speech by P. Sitaramayya at Masulipatam.
 97. Durga Das, *op cit*, p. 176.
 98. *ibid*, p. 175.
 99. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/4 of 1936.
 100. Durga Das, *op cit*, p. 177.
 101. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 58 of 1938, D. I. B.'s note.
 102. Extracts from Presidential Address at Haripura.
 103. Interview with Rajani

- Palme Dutt, *Crossroads*, p. 31.
104. Address at Bombay Corporation, 10 May, 1938, *ibid*, p. 34.
105. Extracts from the Presidential Address at Haripura.
106. *Crossroads*, pp. 50-52.
107. *Indian Struggle*, p. 298.
108. Brabourne to Linlithgow, 19 December, 1938, IOR.
109. *Indian Struggle*, p. 322.
110. Brabourne to Linlithgow *op cit*.
111. In 1933 Bose made several futile attempts to meet Hitler or his aides. At Berlin, with the help of some dissident Nazi he met the foreign office personnel. But nothing fruitful came out, as he himself acknowledged "They attached very little importance to the Indian question", Bose to the Director of the Indian Institute, Berlin, 25 March, 1936. His meeting with Mussolini also failed to serve his purpose. Lothar Frank, *India's Ambassador Abroad*, Bose, Werth, Ayer, (Eds), *A Beacon Across Asia*, (Orient Longman, 1973), pp. 46 ff.
112. *Crossroads*, p. 21.
113. K. Kurti, *op cit*, p. 30.
114. *ibid*, p. 11.
115. *Crossroads*, p. 137.
116. Gandhi to Amrit Kaur, cited in S. Gopal, *op cit*, p. 247.
117. Linlithgow to Zetland, 2 August, 1939, Zetland Collections, Vol. 6.
118. Bose's interview with Zetland, 17 January, 1938. *ibid*.
119. Press Statement, 9 July, 1938, *Crossroads*, pp. 47-8.
120. The text of the AICC resolution was : The AICC reiterate their emphatic condemnation of and complete opposition to the scheme and their decision to combat it in every possible way. The Congress therefore ... calls upon the provincial and local committees and the people generally, as well as the provincial Governments and Ministries, to prevent its inauguration. Gandhi himself might have been against introduction of the Federation Scheme, but he could not prevail over some of his trusted lieutenants like Patel and Rajagopalachari who thought otherwise. Later, the Cripps proposals of

- 1942 which incorporated "all the bad points of the Federation Plan" were rejected by Gandhi, but very powerful support to the proposals was given by Rajagopalachari. Durga Das, op cit, p. 202.
121. K. Biswas, op cit, p. 185 ; also, N. G. Jog, *An Indian Pilgrim, A Beacon Across Asia*, p. 86.
 122. Press interview, reported on 27 January, 1939.
 123. *ibid*.
 124. *Hindusthan Standard*, editorial, 22 January, 1939.
 125. *ibid*.
 126. Khare's press statement, op cit.
 127. *The Pioneer*, (Lucknow), editorial, 28 January, 1939.
 128. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, editorial, 1 February, 1939.
 129. *Hindusthan Standard*, 2 February, 1939.
 130. *ibid*, editorial, 4 February, 1939.
 131. P. Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, (Bombay, 1936), Vol. 2, p. 25.
 132. *I. A. R.*, 1939, Vol. 1, p. 331.
 133. Nehru to Gandhi, 17 April, 1939. *A Bunch Of Old Letters*, p. 380.
 134. AICC Mss., File no. G-20/1939(Part III).
 135. Quoted, *Crossroads*, p. 173,
 136. See p. 77 ; Chapter 2 of this work.
 137. Bose to Nehru, 28 March, 1939, J. Nehru Papers.
 138. Nehru to Bose, 3 April, 1939, *ibid*,
 139. Bose to Gandhi, 25 March, 1939. *A Bunch Of Old Letters*, p. 366.
 140. *Hindusthan Standard*, news item, 1 February, 1939.
 141. Sarat C. Bose to J. Nehru, 4 April, 1939. *A Bunch Of Old Letters*, p 368.
 142. AICC Mss., File no. P-5/1939 (Part II).
 143. Bengal Legislative Assembly Proceedings, Vol. LIV, No. 4, p 41.
 144. G. B., Poll, Conf, File no. 66 of 1939 ; Report on the press for the first fortnight in May.
 145. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, editorial, 3 October, 1939.
 146. S. C. Dasgupta to J. B. Kripalni, 13 July, 1939, AICC Mss., File no. P-5 of 1939 (Part 1).

147. Sarkar to Linlithgow, 4 April, 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Mss EURF 125/121 (Microfilm).
148. Linlithgow to Zetland, 2 August, 1939, Zetland Collections, Vol. 6.
149. *I. A. R.*, 1939, Vol. 2, p. 2.
150. *ibid*, p. 3.
151. Bengal Governor's situation report, December, 1939, File no. P & J 310/1940, IOR.
152. *I. A. R.*, 1939, Vol. 2, p. 6.
153. *Indian Struggle*, p. 339.
154. *Harijan*, 9 September, 1939.
155. Linlithgow to Zetland, 2 August, 1939, Zetland Collections, Vol. 6.
156. S. Gopal, *op cit*, p. 250.
157. Quoted, Durga Das, *op cit*, p. 192.
158. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/11 of 1939.
159. *Forward Bloc*, editorial, 6 August, 1939. The resolution said that the true test of preparedness for civil disobedience lay in vigorous spinning, promoting khaddar and bringing about communal unity by personal service and fraternisation.
160. *ibid*, editorial, 25 November, 1939.
161. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/XI of 1939.
162. P. C. Joshi, *op cit*, p. 24.
163. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, editorial, 7 February, 1940.
164. *Hindusthan Standard*, editorial, 9 February, 1940. This paper wrote series of editorials criticising Gandhi and the High Command after the Tripuri incident.
165. C. I. O., Bombay's report, G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 3/33a of 1940.
166. Bengal Governor's review of political situation, April, 1940, File no. P & J, 2409 of 1940, IOR.
167. *Harijan*, 24 October, 1940.
168. Extracts from a note on V. K. Krishna Menon, G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 3/33 of 1940.
169. Quoted, N. G. Jog, *op cit*, p. 98.
170. G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 3/33 of 1940.
171. AICC Mss., File no. P-5 (Part I) of 1940.
172. *Harijan*, 13 July, 1940.
173. Bose to Sardul Singh Cavesheer, *op cit*.
174. *Harijan*, 19 August, 1940.

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| <p>175. Brabourne to Linlithgow, Calcutta, 19 December, 1938, IOR.</p> <p>176. <i>Indian Struggle</i>.</p> <p>177. <i>ibid</i>, p. 337.</p> <p>178. <i>ibid</i>, p. 336.</p> <p>179. Nirode C. Chaudhuri, <i>Subhas Bose, The Illus-</i></p> | <p><i>trated Weekly Of India</i>, 18 September, 1965.</p> <p>180 G. I., Home, Poll, File no. 18/4 of 1940.</p> <p>181. <i>Hindusthan Standard</i>, 16 January, 1940</p> <p>182. <i>ibid</i>.</p> |
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CONCLUSION

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| <p>1. <i>Indian Struggle</i>, pp. 161-2.</p> <p>2. L. A. Gordon, <i>op cit</i>, pp. 219-20</p> <p>3. In his article <i>Gandhi's Second Rise To Power, Indian Politics, 1924-1929</i>, Amal Tripathi puts emphasis on British policy in India as pursued by Reading and Irwin, which helped Gandhi's revival of power in 1924. <i>Calcutta Historical Journal</i>, Vol. 1, pp. 1, 32.</p> | <p>4. "Andrews, I can understand these young men", the poet said about the revolutionaries, "I don't understand the other variety, the tame variety". Quoted, Y. G. Mukherjee, <i>op cit</i>, p 469.</p> <p>5. B Shiva Rao, <i>India's Freedom Movement</i>, (Orient Longman, 1972), p. 126.</p> <p>6. Durga Das, <i>op cit</i>, p 191</p> |
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 - b) *Amrita Bazar Patrika*.
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 - f) *The Bengalee*.
 - g) *The Statesman*.
- ii) Calcutta University Central Library :
 - a) *Bengal Past and Present*.
 - b) *Calcutta Historical Journal*.
 - c) *Journal of the I. E. S. H. R.*
 - d) *Masik Basumati* (Bengali)
 - e) *Modern Review*.
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- b) Ajoy Kumar Mukherjee, Congress Leader of Midnapore, Chief Minister, West Bengal, Calcutta, May 1975.
- c) Dr. Nirmal Kumar Bose, Gandhi's Private Secretary in Bengal, 1971 till his death in October 1972.
- d) Satyendra Narayan Mazumbar, Anusilan Party member, one of the early Communists of Bengal, Calcutta, September 1974.

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